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## The morality issue: How Darlan influenced the Allied unconditional surrender pledge in World War II

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THE MORALITY ISSUE: HOW DARLAN INFLUENCED THE ALLIED  
UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER PLEDGE IN WORLD WAR II

An Abstract of a Thesis  
Submitted  
In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

Brian Fiderlein  
University of Northern Iowa  
May 1998

## ABSTRACT

When World War II began in September 1939, polls indicated that most Americans believed it did not pose a threat to the United States and opposed any involvement by a ratio of 27-to-1.

President Franklin Roosevelt perceived that the power of Nazi Germany and its ideals posed a threat to American democracy. He presented the war to the American public as a moral struggle as well as one for security. The President publicized this view most notably in his Four Freedoms speech and in the Atlantic Charter. Both statements defined the moral goals of basic human freedoms and national self-determination.

Most Americans embraced the moral goals of the war when the United States went to war in December 1941. Those goals were challenged when American forces under General Dwight D. Eisenhower invaded French North Africa on November 8, 1942. French North Africa was then controlled by the quasi-fascist French government located in Vichy. To save lives, and to speed conquest of the area, Eisenhower secured the surrender of the French forces from Admiral Jean Francois Darlan, a Vichy official. Darlan's fascist background seemed to contradict Roosevelt's moral crusade.

News of the "Darlan Deal" provoked a public outcry. Dozens of editorials appeared in American and British

newspapers criticizing Eisenhower's action. Most of these editorials argued that deals with fascists violated the moral basis for the war. Other fascists, it seemed, might also be accommodated in the future. Eisenhower was also accused of betraying the Free French, under General Charles de Gaulle, who had challenged Vichy for the loyalty of the French people.

Roosevelt attempted to quiet criticism by referring to Darlan as a "temporary expedient" who would ultimately answer to the French people. This explanation met temporary acceptance, but skepticism increased as time passed.

Darlan's assassination on December 24, 1942 allowed Roosevelt to renew the Allied commitment to destroying fascism. The Darlan Deal played a large role in Roosevelt's pledge to accept nothing less than Unconditional Surrender from the Axis powers at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943.

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Entitled: The Morality Issue: How Darlan Influenced the Allied Unconditional Surrender Pledge in World War II

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## CHAPTER I

### FORMING AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION

What drives nations to war—and what stirs the general public to strong support of an armed conflict that may not even directly affect them?

In World War II, moral indignation proved the defining factor in keeping public support of the Allied cause strong. Even before the United States entered the war in 1941, American political leaders framed the conflict as one of great moral significance: Nazism and fascism versus individual rights; totalitarian states versus democratic nations; good versus evil.

With the war cast in this light, the political and military figures of the time came to symbolize their respective causes. Hitler became the embodiment of evil, personifying totalitarianism and fascism; Churchill and Roosevelt became the embodiments of liberty and democracy. Even less significant figures received this treatment. According to the Allied propaganda, Admiral Jean François Darlan, a minister in the semi-fascist Vichy French regime, was a betrayer of democracy for the policies he endorsed. Darlan proved unable to escape this portrayal, even after he came over to the Allied side in November 1942.

Why frame the war in this manner? Both the Allied and Axis sides used rhetoric to mold public opinion in favor of

their side of the war. People are more apt to support a moral and just cause than one of outright aggression. So, to earn public support, the Allies needed public opinion on their side.

This was no easy task for United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The American public at the outset of World War II did not support the United States' entry into another armed conflict in Europe, especially one fought only for personal or national gain. After World War I, a definite isolationist sentiment captured America. Fearing that the League of Nations Covenant would drag the United States into future foreign conflicts, the Senate failed to ratify it.

This isolationist sentiment continued to pervade American public opinion throughout the period between the wars. This sentiment was deepened by the findings of the "Nye Committee." In 1934, the United States Senate formed the Special Committee Investigating the Munitions Industry, headed by Senator Gerald P. Nye, to uncover the economic roots of World War I.<sup>1</sup> After reviewing corporate and government files and listening to hours of testimony from business leaders, the committee reported that the munitions industry, seeing the potential for large profits, had lobbied for and promoted America's entrance into World War

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<sup>1</sup>Wayne S. Cole, *Senator Gerald P. Nye and American Foreign Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), 66.

I. This pursuit of profits, the Nye Committee claimed, was a primary cause for war.<sup>2</sup> By focusing on the economic aspects of war, the Nye Committee reinforced the public's belief that war allowed a minority of individuals to profit at the expense of the majority.

President Franklin Roosevelt attempted to move American public opinion from its opposition to military force in a speech he delivered on October 5, 1937. In his speech, the president sought to convince the American public that force could actually be used to enhance world peace. The "peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort in opposition to those... creating a state of international anarchy and instability from which there is no escape through mere isolation or neutrality." Roosevelt proposed that aggressor nations be placed in a form of "quarantine."<sup>3</sup>

The response of the American public was not what Roosevelt had hoped for. The Catholic Association for International Peace supported the quarantine approach, but claimed the policy "need not, and in our opinion, must not mean war." The American Federation of Labor also endorsed Roosevelt's speech, but at the same time it declared its opposition to American involvement in "European or Asiatic

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign American Policy, 1932-1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 148.

wars." American newspapers also supported the quarantine proposal, as long as "these actions would not lead to war..."<sup>4</sup>

Despite Roosevelt's efforts, he could not shake the American public's anti-war sentiment. A November 8, 1939 Gallup Poll indicated that 68 percent of Americans felt that American involvement in World War I had been a mistake.<sup>5</sup> By the early 1940s, this anti-war sentiment had begun to give life to various isolationist groups, whose goal was to keep the United States out of World War II. These groups, such as the America First Committee, the Keep America Out of War Committee, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, justified their stance by citing public opinion polls that showed the majority of the American public was opposed to the United States entry into the war.<sup>6</sup>

For example, a December 8, 1939 Gallup poll indicated that Americans opposed entry into World War II by a margin of 27-to-1.<sup>7</sup> Although the degree of the public's resistance to entering the war would change over the years, the vast majority of Americans remained opposed to entering the

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 151.

<sup>5</sup>American Institute of Public Opinion (The Gallup Poll), *Gallup Poll Reports: 1935-1968* (Princeton, NJ: American Institute of Public Opinion, 1969), 104.

<sup>6</sup>Wayne S. Cole, *America First: The Battle Against Intervention 1940-1941* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), 53.

<sup>7</sup>*Gallup Poll Reports*, 105.

conflict. A May 29, 1940 Gallup Poll showed that although more Americans now favored entering World War II than in earlier polls, those opposed to U.S. involvement outnumbered those favoring war by a margin of 13-to-1.<sup>8</sup>

The German defeat of France in June 1940 seemed to further justify the isolationist attitude. France, widely considered to have the strongest army in the world, certainly had the strongest in Europe. The French had fielded the largest Allied contingent in World War I and one of France's most famous generals of that war, Marshal Henri Pétain, continued to wield political and military influence.<sup>9</sup> A Gallup Poll conducted in America on October 13, 1940, after the French defeat, showed that 83 percent of those planning to vote in the upcoming U.S. elections in November opposed involvement in the war.<sup>10</sup>

What the American public failed to realize, however, was that fascism's aggressive tendencies posed a threat to the United States. Adolf Hitler, in particular, planned to eventually fight a war with the United States. Although his opinions changed over time, Hitler always viewed the United States as a future adversary. In the 1920s, Hitler's

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<sup>8</sup>*Gallup Poll Reports*, 110.

<sup>9</sup>Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World At Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 84.

<sup>10</sup>*Gallup Poll Reports*, 115.

statements indicated that he viewed the United States as a nation that maintained a pure Nordic racial makeup through an essentially racist immigration policy. With vast available living area and resources, the American racial stock posed a real threat to Germany superiority. One of the goals of National Socialism was to prepare Germany for the eventual conflict with the United States.<sup>11</sup>

Hitler's statements about the United States changed in the early 1930s. The German dictator felt America had been permanently weakened by the Great Depression, especially due to the influence of African-Americans and Jews.<sup>12</sup> But Hitler still felt that Germany would have to defeat the United States,<sup>13</sup> especially since he hoped to dominate Mexico and Latin America some day.<sup>14</sup>

Roosevelt resolved to convince the American public of the fascist threat and to gain support for his policies. This would justify further support of a war and eventual United States entry into the conflict—all to support the Allies' goals and to keep the world free for democracy, self-determination, and human rights.

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<sup>11</sup>Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Diplomatic Revolution in Europe 1933-36* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 21.

<sup>12</sup>Weinberg, *Foreign Policy 1933-36*, 21.

<sup>13</sup>Gerhard L. Weinberg, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Starting World War II, 1937-1939* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 252.

<sup>14</sup>Weinberg, *Foreign Policy 1933-36*, 22.

In order to secure popular support for his programs, and to prepare the country for even greater commitments to the Allies, Roosevelt had to blunt the arguments of the isolationists. He did this in a "Fireside Chat" radio broadcast on December 29, 1940. In this broadcast, the President warned listeners that should the Axis powers win World War II and gain control of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, "all of us, in all the Americas, would be living at the point of a gun—a gun loaded with explosive bullets economic as well as military."<sup>15</sup>

Roosevelt argued that the solution to this threat was not to encourage a negotiated peace, as advocated by the isolationists, but rather to send aid to opponents of aggression. Sending armaments to England would not commit the United States to entering the war, the President said. Instead, it would allow the Allies to continue to fight for their own liberty and American security.<sup>16</sup> Roosevelt said:

We must be the great arsenal of democracy. For us this is an emergency as serious as war itself. We must apply ourselves to our task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Dallek, 256.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 256-257.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 257.



After this statement, messages to the White House ran 100-to-1 in favor of the speech. A public opinion poll conducted soon after the broadcast showed that 80 percent of those who had heard or read the speech approved of it; only 12 percent opposed it. Moreover, Roosevelt's Fireside Chat had been heard or read by more of the American public than any previous speech by the President.<sup>18</sup> A Gallup Poll conducted the next day showed that 60 percent of U.S. voters favored aiding Great Britain.<sup>19</sup>

Encouraged by the results of his Fireside Chat, Roosevelt planned to formally propose aid to the Allies. To further emphasize the Allied need for American armaments, and to strengthen public support, the President framed the war in moral terms. He did this in his "Four Freedoms" speech, which he delivered on January 6, 1941.

The Allied leadership put forward two basic statements that outlined the foundation of the Allied cause: the "Four Freedoms" speech and the Atlantic Charter. To the American public, these statements defined the moral purpose of the war. They gave the public a clear reason to change their views from isolationist withdrawal to outward support of the Allied cause. In the Four Freedoms speech, the President

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 257-258.

<sup>19</sup>Gallup Poll Reports, 118.

argued that the fascist nations posed a direct threat to democracy in general and the United States in particular:

Every realist knows that the democratic way of life is at this moment being directly assailed in every part of the world—assailed either by arms, or by secret spreading of poisonous propaganda by those who seek to destroy unity and promote discord in nations still at peace....

I find it necessary to report that the future and safety of our country and of our democracy are overwhelmingly involved in events far beyond our borders....

The first phase of the invasion of this Hemisphere would not be the landing of regular troops. The necessary strategic points would be occupied by secret agents and their dupes—great numbers of them are already here, and in Latin America....

As long as the aggressor nations maintain the offensive, they—not we—will choose the time and the place and the method of their attack.<sup>20</sup>

After saying that the Axis nations posed a direct threat to the United States, Roosevelt argued that the United States had to lend all possible support to the Allied countries. The Allied countries had long traditions of democratic institutions and respect for individual rights which needed to be upheld.

The Axis countries, however, had replaced their democratic institutions with fascist governments. Fascist governments sought to institute a totalitarian system that

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<sup>20</sup>Franklin Roosevelt, "State of the Union Address," <<http://www.libertynet.org/~edcivic/fdr.html>>, 6 January 1942.

glorified the nation and its people, not the individual. This took the form of extreme nationalism, where other nationalities or ethnic groups were considered inferior. This manifested itself in acts of war and aggression to accomplish the subjugation of "inferior" peoples.

Roosevelt used the Four Freedoms speech to argue that the United States could fight these anti-democratic ideas by supplying arms to Britain and the other countries opposing Germany. In this way, the United States would act "as an arsenal for them as for ourselves."<sup>21</sup> Using its arms, money, and influence, the United States' goal was to create a world based on what Roosevelt defined as the four basic human freedoms: speech, religion, prosperity, and security.

The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want—which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peace time life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear—which translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.... That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called new order of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

The President's statement alarmed isolationists, who interpreted the speech as Roosevelt's attempt to commit the United States as the "guardian of the world's virtue."<sup>23</sup> But the overall mood of the nation seemed to be changing. A January 24, 1941 Gallup Poll indicated that two out of three American voters now favored aid to Britain.<sup>24</sup>

For his part, Roosevelt sought to reinforce the nation's commitment to the moral policy of restoring or advancing the Four Freedoms throughout the world. Moreover, he aimed to identify his Four Freedoms policy with assistance to Great Britain.<sup>25</sup> In doing so, he hoped to eliminate the political stalemate between the isolationists and the interventionists in Congress and in the country.<sup>26</sup> Even though the United States was not yet in the war, Roosevelt sought to educate the public about the ideals and beliefs the war was about. When the United States eventually entered the war, as the President felt it would, the public would be willing to work long hours, support rationing, and send their sons to fight in foreign countries, all sacrifices necessary to achieve victory.

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<sup>23</sup>Thomas N. Guinsburg, *The Pursuit of Isolationism in the United States Senate from Versailles to Pearl Harbor* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), 255.

<sup>24</sup>Gallup Poll Reports, 119.

<sup>25</sup>Douglas Brinkley and David R. Facey-Crowther, ed., *The Atlantic Charter* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 11-12.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

Roosevelt seized the opportunity to further promote his goal when he, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and their advisors agreed to secretly meet off the coast of Newfoundland in August 1941. The moment Roosevelt awaited came at the end of the conference, when the British and American leaders signed the Atlantic Charter.

Taking its cue from Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, the Atlantic Charter reinforced and expanded the President's moral statements and established a set of common policy goals. Here, in essence, was a description of principles that the Allies, including the United States, felt that war was being fought for.

The Atlantic Charter established eight key principles, each based on democratic ideals and respect for national and individual rights and freedoms:

First, their countries [the United States and the United Kingdom] seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;

Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned;

Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign right and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment of all States, great of small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;

Fifth, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security;

Sixth, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their borders, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;

Seventh, such a peace should enable men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance;

Eighth, they believe that all the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons must come to the abandonment of the use of force.<sup>27</sup>

The Atlantic Charter asserted the intention of the United States to restore democratic values to the European countries wrecked by war. The obstacle to the advancement of these goals was Nazi Germany.

Roosevelt did not expect to convince the public to embrace entry into World War II immediately. Public opinion polls showed that the American public still opposed taking an active role in the war; 74 percent still opposed involvement—only a one percent drop from a pre-conference poll. Indeed, the Atlantic Conference failed to drain support away from the isolationists, who berated the

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<sup>27</sup>"Joint Declaration of the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Great Britain." *The Department of State Bulletin* V (16 August 1941): 125-126.

Atlantic Charter for ignoring the freedoms of religion and speech.<sup>28</sup>

At the same time, however, an August 24 Gallup Poll showed that 73 percent of the public strongly supported the President's foreign policy.<sup>29</sup> This signified that the public recognized the principles at stake in World War II and approved of Roosevelt's efforts to help the Allies.

Roosevelt had succeeded in adding a moral element to the discussion of American involvement in the war, a point which Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter raised in a letter to the President just days after the conference:

We live by symbols and we can't too often recall them... And you two in that ocean... Gave meaning to the conflict between civilization and arrogant, brute challenge; and gave promise more powerful and binding than any formal treaty could, that civilization has brains and resources that tyranny will not be able to overcome... The deed and the spirit and the invigoration breathed there in the hearts of men will endure and will kindle actions toward the goal of ridding the world of this horror.<sup>30</sup>

The American public came to regard the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter as the moral basis of American policy before and after the United States' entrance into the war.

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<sup>28</sup>Dallek, 284-285.

<sup>29</sup>Gallup Poll Reports, 126.

<sup>30</sup>Dallek, 284.

The first real test of these principles did not come until after the United States had been in the war for almost a year; however, it proved a decisive moment for the United States-Allied policy. In hopes of gaining a base of operations for an eventual move into southern Europe, British and American forces, in an operation code-named TORCH, landed in French North Africa on November 8, 1942. France was then ruled by a quasi-fascist government at Vichy. This government had signed an armistice with Nazi Germany in July 1940.

At the time of the American landings, the French Minister of Marine, Admiral Jean François Darlan, was located in Algiers, the administrative capital of French North Africa. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the commander of the North African invasion force, agreed to recognize Darlan's authority as head of the French North African administration in return for a cease-fire agreement.

Negotiating with Darlan was a calculated risk for Eisenhower. As a member of the Vichy government, Darlan had instituted authoritarian policies and collaborated with the Nazis. In addition, recognizing and preserving Darlan's authority was sure to anger Charles de Gaulle's exiled Free French organization, which had continued to resist the Germans even after the French defeat. More importantly, negotiating with Darlan raised the specter of appeasement,



suggesting that the Allies were not as committed to eliminating fascism as they claimed.

Eisenhower recognized Darlan's significance. Only Darlan, as the appointed successor to the Vichy Premier, Marshal Pétain, had the authority to give orders to the French soldiers and sailors in North Africa. Only Darlan could order the French troops to cease their resistance to Allied forces. Eisenhower's negotiations saved American and British lives and allowed the Allies to advance more rapidly against German positions in Tunisia.

Despite these advantages, the "Darlan Deal" caused a public uproar in the United States and Great Britain. To the public, it seemed as if the Allies were abandoning their proclaimed principles of restoring democratic institutions and eliminating fascism, as embodied in the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter.

Negotiating seemed to suggest to the Allied public that the threat posed by fascism was not as great as originally portrayed. The public demanded an explanation for the Darlan Deal; if fascism did not pose a threat to democracy, then why were the American and British peoples sacrificing so much for the war effort? The public outcry against the Darlan Deal became so great that President Roosevelt was moved to make the unconditional surrender pledge during the Casablanca Conference to restore the moral basis for the war.

CHAPTER II  
ENTER DARLAN

Darlan's rise to political power began during the German invasion of France. On May 10, 1940, the German army crossed the border into Belgium and the Netherlands. To the world, it appeared as if Germany intended to invade France as it had during World War I, through the Low Countries. The British and French armies stationed in France quickly responded to the German threat by crossing into Belgium and taking up defensive positions.<sup>31</sup>

However, on May 14, German tanks broke through the Ardennes Forest, long thought impassable, along the French-German border. Motorized infantry and armored corps followed the tank units into France to reinforce German positions. Once secure inside France, the German tanks turned toward the English Channel, trapping the French and British armies in Belgium between two German armies.<sup>32</sup>

With the French army surrounded and the Germans advancing toward Paris, the French Premier, Paul Reynaud, appointed Marshal Henri Pétain to the position of vice-premier on May 18. Reynaud later claimed that he brought Pétain into the

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<sup>31</sup>William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Touchstone, 1981), 713.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 723-724.

French cabinet because the marshal was one of France's most popular military figures. Reynaud said he felt Pétain's prestige would strengthen the public's morale.<sup>33</sup>

Whatever benefit Pétain's presence in the cabinet may have brought, it did not slow the advance of the German armies. On June 14, the German army entered Paris and the French Government relocated to Bordeaux. It seemed as if France would be completely overrun by the Germans.<sup>34</sup>

The following day, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill received a telegram from Reynaud, asking the Prime Minister to release France from its pledge not to seek a separate peace with the Germans. On June 16, the French cabinet received official permission from its British ally to ask for armistice terms, but the British cabinet included one important condition:

On condition, but only on condition that the French fleet shall be directed to British ports pending negotiations, the Government of His Majesty gives its full consent to an inquiry by the French Government with a view to finding out the conditions for an armistice. His Majesty's Government being determined to continue the war, will abstain completely from any part in this inquiry concerning an armistice.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>William L. Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 7-9.

<sup>34</sup>Weinberg, 138.

<sup>35</sup>Langer, 36-37.

To prevent a French surrender, later that same day Churchill proposed a union of France and the United Kingdom, the first such union since Henry V had defeated the French army and concluded the Treaty of Troyes in 1420.<sup>36</sup> The plan would have set up a single war cabinet that would control the armed forces of both nations for the remainder of the war.<sup>37</sup>

General Charles De Gaulle, Reynaud's representative in London, especially favored the idea and urged the British cabinet to approve the union.<sup>38</sup> Reynaud introduced the proposal to the French cabinet, but it was never seriously considered. Pétain rejected the proposal saying it was just a British device to prevent an armistice.<sup>39</sup> Other French cabinet officers discarded the union proposal as a British plot to acquire French colonial possessions.<sup>40</sup>

A discouraged Reynaud resigned the night of June 16; he was replaced by Marshal Pétain. Although the French President asked Reynaud to form a new cabinet composed of members favoring resistance, Reynaud refused.<sup>41</sup> The next

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<sup>36</sup>John Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 415.

<sup>37</sup>Langer, 38.

<sup>38</sup>Weinberg, *A World At Arms*, 139-140.

<sup>39</sup>Langer, 38.

<sup>40</sup>Charmley, 415.

<sup>41</sup>Langer, 39.

day, Pétain, through the Spanish ambassador to France, asked the Germans for armistice terms.<sup>42</sup>

Pétain replaced those ministers who favored continued resistance against the Germans with supporters of an armistice. As his Minister of Marine, Pétain selected a high-ranking naval officer and a long-time associate, Admiral Jean Darlan.<sup>43</sup>

Admiral Darlan was no stranger to politics; from 1926-1939, he served as chief of staff for the French minister of the navy. The position gave him close access to important members of the French Third Republic, a connection he used to gain funds for increased naval construction. Under Darlan's supervision, the French navy had reached its largest size ever. Despite its apparent strengths, though, the navy never distinguished itself in the war against the Axis.<sup>44</sup>

Darlan, however, remained committed to the Allied cause. After the Soviet Union, then Allied with Nazi Germany, invaded Finland in 1940, for example, the admiral wanted to send forces to aid the Finns. Darlan argued that the Allies could send troops to Finland by going through Norway and

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<sup>42</sup>Shirer, 738.

<sup>43</sup>Alec De Montmorency, *The Enigma of Admiral Darlan*. (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1943), 87-88.

<sup>44</sup>Richard Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971), 110.

Sweden. This would also allow the Allies to control the flow of Norwegian iron ore through Sweden to Germany. When the Germans invaded Norway itself in 1940, Darlan remained active in planning Allied resistance to the German landings.<sup>45</sup>

The French navy could do to little to prevent the collapse of the French army after the Germans invaded, although Darlan did command the French navy at Dunkirk and helped evacuate the British and French troops trapped there. For his efforts, he was recognized by the British government.<sup>46</sup> However, ten days after receiving this award, Darlan arrived in Bourdeaux to assume his position as Minister of Marine, in a government seeking an armistice with the Germans. Since the French army had been defeated, the only bargaining piece the French had left was their fleet. As head of France's only remaining military force, Darlan was bound to become a major player in Pétain's government.<sup>47</sup>

Aside from the importance the French fleet would grant him, Darlan seemed to have another reason to favor an armistice with Germany. The admiral, like many in Pétain's cabinet, felt the war was all but over; Darlan predicted a

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>De Montmorency, 87.

<sup>47</sup>Paxton, 111.

British surrender in eight weeks.<sup>48</sup> Why prolong a losing conflict and risk receiving harsher terms?

It may have been for this reason that Darlan opposed the British demand to send the French fleet to the United Kingdom. While the British had a vested interest in seeing that the French fleet did not fall into German hands, Darlan also had a vested interest in keeping the fleet in French territory. Sending the fleet to Britain would eliminate Darlan's basis of power and would also deprive France of its most important bargaining chip, possibly to see it used as a bargaining chip by the British in a few months.<sup>49</sup>

However, the Americans, like the British, were seriously concerned about the fate of the French fleet. Roosevelt was so concerned that his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, sent a message urging the French Government to refuse any German demand to surrender the French fleet. The American ambassador to France delivered this message to both the French foreign minister and Admiral Darlan on June 18.<sup>50</sup> The message read, in part:

The President desires you to say that in the opinion of this Government, should the French Government, before concluding any armistice with the Germans, fail to see that the fleet is kept out of the hands of her opponents, the French

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<sup>48</sup>Langer, 43.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 45.

Government will be pursuing a policy which will fatally impair the preservation of the French Empire and the eventual restoration of French independence and autonomy. Furthermore, should the French Government fail to take these steps and permit the French Fleet to be surrendered to Germany, the French Government will permanently lose the friendship and goodwill of the Government of the United States.<sup>51</sup>

The foreign minister brought the American message to the French cabinet. To reassure the Americans, the cabinet voted to refuse any German demand to surrender the fleet and informed the American and British ambassadors of the French Government's action.<sup>52</sup>

The next day, June 19, 1940, a British delegation arrived to seek further French assurances on the status of the fleet. The delegation consisted of Lord Lloyd, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, and Albert Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty.<sup>53</sup> Since it seemed evident that France would accept German armistice terms, Alexander proposed that the French fleet be transferred to America for the duration of the war. This Darlan would not accept. Sending the fleet to America would weaken France's bargaining position with the Germans—and eliminate the basis of Darlan's own power. "Marshal Pétain has given the British Government his soldier's word that he will not surrender a single unit of

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>53</sup>De Montmorency, 87-88.



the French Fleet to the foes of Great Britain," Darlan said. "You also have my word. Is that not a sufficient guarantee for you?" Alexander replied, "We have no use for words." At Alexander's words, Pétain rose from the table and the last British and French allied meeting came to an end.<sup>54</sup>

France signed the armistice with Germany at Compiègne, the site of the World War I armistice, on June 21, 1940. The terms were harsh, but allowed France to retain some sovereignty. While the Channel and Atlantic coasts were occupied, the French government was allowed to retain control of southern areas, essentially creating a rump state. The French government also retained control of its colonial holdings, but had to pay massive reparations.<sup>55</sup> Most important to Great Britain, the armistice recalled the French navy to metropolitan French ports where they would be demilitarized for the duration of the war.<sup>56</sup>

The fall of France radically changed American public opinion. In May 1940, before the French surrender, a poll of American public opinion found that 33 percent of Americans favored American funding of the British war effort, even if it meant war between the United States and Germany. A slightly greater group, 38 percent, opposed a

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 91-92.

<sup>55</sup>Weinberg, *A World At Arms*, 140.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 145.

United States entrance into the war, but still favored aid to Britain and France. Only 23 percent opposed all aid to the Allied countries.<sup>57</sup>

After the French defeat, American public opinion had changed greatly. Britain fought Germany alone. Fifty-three percent of Americans now stated that they gave a higher priority to defeating Hitler than keeping the U.S. out of the war. This figure rose to 68 percent by December. Only 12 percent of those polled still favored strict neutrality.<sup>58</sup> For the first time, a clear consensus was developing that fascism posed a threat to America itself.

The American government shared the anxiety of its populace toward Hitler. In order to curtail German influence in France, the U.S. government centered its foreign policy on three goals: to prevent the French navy from being used by the Germans; to prevent Axis control of French territories in Africa and North America; and to prevent French collaboration with the Germans.<sup>59</sup> This policy was clearly spelled out by President Roosevelt in a letter to Marshal Pétain on October 25, 1940:

The Government of the United States received from the Pétain Government during the first days it

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<sup>57</sup>Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America 1935-1941* (Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 214.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 215.

<sup>59</sup>Langer, 80.

held office the most solemn assurances that the French Fleet would not be surrendered. If the French Government now permits the Germans to use the French Fleet in hostile operations against the British Fleet, such action would constitute a flagrant and deliberate breach of faith with the United States Government.

Any agreement entered into between France and Germany which partook of the character above mentioned would most definitely wreck the traditional friendship between the French and American peoples, would permanently remove any chance that this Government would be disposed to give any assistance to the French people in their distress, and would create a wave of bitter indignation against France on the part of the American public opinion<sup>60</sup>

On December 14, 1940, the American chargé d'affaires met with Admiral Darlan. This was a particularly important meeting as the admiral was about to become vice-president of the council; in effect, Pétain's prime minister. Darlan reassured the American diplomat that the French navy and French territories would never be surrendered to the Axis. However, Darlan said the Germans would probably win the war, which would be better for France. If the British won the war, Darlan said, they would take valuable colonies like Madagascar and Dakar from France, but Germany would take less important territories like Alsace and Lorraine ("which are lost anyway"), the Cameroons and British Nigeria.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 116-117.

Darlan went on to denounce the British. He claimed the British high command was composed of imbeciles, and condemned the unreliability of "the drunkard Churchill." Although the French fleet would never be surrendered to the Germans, the French might attack Gibraltar if the British attempted to blockade France. "With Spanish and German help the Rock wouldn't hold out long," Darlan claimed.<sup>62</sup> Darlan's argument had some basis in fact; the Spanish government had been aided by the Germans and Italians during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. If Spain decided to enter the war on the Axis side, Gibraltar would certainly be attacked.

American foreign relations with Vichy France served another purpose. By keeping relations with France open, Roosevelt hoped to gain information that the United States could use later, during an American invasion of French North African territory. Robert Sherwood, Roosevelt's speech writer, claimed that the president had begun planning in August 1940 for an African invasion, months after France had surrendered to Germany and over a year before the U.S. entered the war.

Sherwood reported that Roosevelt had also prepared a map of the eastern coastal defenses of the United States. The president showed the map to Harry Hopkins, one of the

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 117.

Roosevelt's top aides, and argued that only 1.5 percent of the American coastline could be defended against invasion. An enemy could choose from any number of points to make a landing.<sup>63</sup>

Bearing this fact in mind, Roosevelt argued that American forces should pre-empt an attack by first landing on enemy-held territory. "On the northwest coast of Africa, for instance," the president told Hopkins.<sup>64</sup> Roosevelt was no doubt influenced by a report sent to Washington by the American naval attaché to France. After a tour of North Africa, the attaché reported that France could only re-enter the war from its African colonies. The attaché based his opinion on the presence of 125,000 French soldiers on active duty and another 200,000 in reserve in North Africa. Roosevelt transferred a State department official, Robert Murphy, from France to North Africa in order to contact and support anti-Nazi French military leaders.<sup>65</sup>

But Roosevelt's maneuvering was hidden from the public. The longer he continued relations with Vichy, the more the American public began to attack the policy. The American press fully reported the authoritarian and collaborationist character of the Vichy regime, but did not immediately

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<sup>63</sup>Peter Tompkins, *The Murder of Admiral Darlan: A Study in Conspiracy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), 18.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 17-19.

question continued relations. Criticism developed slowly, largely due to statements by American officials who spoke of Vichy's dangerous relationship with German. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox delivered such a speech in New York on April 24, 1941:

Too few of us realize, and still fewer acknowledge, the size of the disaster to American hemispheric safety if Germany, already the conqueror of France, should establish herself in Dakar, a French colonial possession. From there, with her surface ships, submarines and long-range bombers, a victorious Germany could substantially cut us off from all commerce with South America and make the Monroe Doctrine a scrap of paper.<sup>66</sup>

An anti-Vichy editorial appeared in the July 14, 1941 edition of the *New York Times*. The editorial, titled "Bastille Day," recognized that July 14 was the French equivalent of the American July 4. Before the French Revolution, the French monarchy used the Bastille to imprison republican sympathizers, the paper said. The storming of the Bastille signified the French rejection of monarchy and the rise of democracy. However, the *Times* claimed that no French citizen would celebrate July 14, 1941. The Nazis had established a new Bastille.

This is a bastion that must be stormed and destroyed; a new emblem of tyranny that must disappear from France. The task is gigantic, but the French, remembering their past, will be equal to the future. While the Nazis occupy France,

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<sup>66</sup>Langer, 143-144.

each day is Bastille Day for its people: a reminder of their tradition of liberty and a renewed call to action.<sup>67</sup>

An editorial titled "Encirclement" appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor* on August 11, 1941. The paper warned readers that Germany was positioned to topple the world's democracies.

On the checkerboard of world war the Nazis are attacking at every available point. They know that their engagement with Russia is offering the democratic powers a golden opportunity to take the offensive. In this crisis they are trying to use Japan, Italy, and Vichy France to distract, confuse and hamper any strong British-American move...Vichy is moving toward an active alliance which would give Berlin a military and naval advantage more than counterbalancing American occupation of Iceland.<sup>68</sup>

Only by giving the full measure of American support, "something stronger than words or ineffective economic pressures," to Britain to counter fascist threats could American democracy be secure, the paper claimed.<sup>69</sup>

More anti-Vichy articles appeared in the August 27, 1941 issue of the *New York Post*. The paper's main editorial, for instance, took the State Department to task for its "appeasement trade with Vichy—the reciprocal exchange of

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<sup>67</sup>"Bastille Day," *New York Times*, 14 July 1941, 12.

<sup>68</sup>"Encirclement," *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 August 1941, 22.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*

goods with French North Africa which should have stopped short the moment Pétain embraced the Axis... For all the public knows, that suicide barter goes on."<sup>70</sup>

In his "I'd Rather Be Right" column, nationally syndicated columnist Samuel Grafton discussed the measures that democracy needed to take in order to defend itself against fascism. He warned readers that fascist states had strongholds in the Western Hemisphere.

A consciously democratic approach would have begun with the diagnosis that France had become Fascist. It would then have recalled that Germany had been Fascist for some years. It would have reached the same conclusion that, since both countries now belonged to the same system, democracy had nothing to hope from either. We ought then to have seized the French colonies at once, realizing that they had been transferred to Fascism the moment France went Fascist; that Herr Hitler did not need a deed to Martinique so long as he had a deed to Pétain.<sup>71</sup>

The same edition saw a letter to the editor from the Clearing House for Youth Groups expressing the organization's preference for de Gaulle's Free French. The youth organization urged President Roosevelt to "help the world's fight against tyranny" by recognizing the Free French, providing Lend Lease aid to the Free French, and by "occupying Martinique and all French possessions in this

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<sup>70</sup>Samuel Grafton, "I'd Rather Be Right," *The New York Post*, 27 August 1941, 18.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.



hemisphere, to be held in trust for the people of France until their freedom has been won."<sup>72</sup>

Given the disapproval of Vichy France and its collaborationist policies, as expressed in the media, it would seem only natural that this disapproval would extend to the individual members of the Vichy Government. The Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter dedicated the Allies to restoring democratic government and human rights to those living in fascist occupied territories. By definition, those who served fascist states and attempted to establish a political and social order that ran counter to the principles of the Atlantic Charter should be counted among the enemy. The American public clearly took this line of thinking in regard to Vichy officials.

On February 13, 1941, *Current History* ran an article profiling the major personages in the Vichy government. The journal described Darlan as:

A Navy man, an admiral, and therefore by training and tradition anti-British—the officers of the French Navy for generations have resented the superiority of British sea power. Jean Darlan is also ambitious. For both these reasons he is more likely to approve of "collaboration" with the Germans, though he is unquestionably a sincere patriot.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>"The Sailor," *Current History* 52 (13 February 1941): 10.

On May 26, 1941, *Life* magazine discussed Darlan's role in aligning Vichy France with Nazi Germany. Given the French government's actions, the magazine claimed, American foreign policy should favor the exiled, anti-Nazi Free French organization, headed by Gen. Charles de Gaulle:

The French Vichy Government and Nazi Germany quietly reached an understanding which was very bad news indeed for the democracies. Following a 50-minute conference with Hitler at Berchtesgaden, Admiral François Darlan, French Vice Premier, agreed that France would here-after stand together with Germany on economic and apparently political matters.... This meant that France was betting on a Nazi victory. The only remaining Frenchmen whom the U.S. could now treat as friends were the Free French, fighting hard for the Allies under General Charles de Gaulle.<sup>74</sup>

*Time* magazine also associated Darlan with fascist policies in its May 26, 1941 issue by stating that when Darlan replaced Pierre Laval, the French arch-collaborationist, as vice premier it was widely viewed as an anti-Nazi move. "But in Vice Premier Admiral Darlan the old Marshal picked a successor to Laval who has made himself superbly persona grata at Berchtesgaden and who is, in addition, much less unpopular in France than the scheming M. Laval."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>"Vichy Gives in to the Nazis and Franklin Roosevelt Recalls America's 'Undeclared Wars,'" *Life*, 26 May 1941, 32.

<sup>75</sup>"France: Vichy Chooses," *Time*, 26 May 1941, 31.

By joining the Vichy government, Admiral Darlan became, in the view of the American public, a fascist by association, and therefore an enemy. Roosevelt had turned American public opinion in support of aiding the Allies through moral arguments. The Vichy government had been profiled as a collaborationist, hostile, fascist state by both the media and the United States government. After these developments it was impossible to reconcile negotiations with fascists with the stated purpose of the war. The groundwork had been laid for the public criticism that resulted from Eisenhower's negotiations with Admiral Darlan for a cease-fire during the North African campaign.

CHAPTER III  
THE ROAD TO ALGERIA

General Eisenhower arrived at Gibraltar on November 4, 1942. He would later call it "the most dismal setting we occupied during the war." His quarters and office were little more than damp caves filled with stagnant air and lit by light bulbs that only partially illuminated the underground tunnels. Since the invasion force was still three days away from the landing sites, there was little for Eisenhower to do but wait.<sup>76</sup>

He had originally planned to move his base of operations from England to Gibraltar on Monday, November 2 but weather had prevented his leaving until Wednesday morning. To cover his absence in Britain, it was announced to the press that Eisenhower would be returning to Washington D.C. for conferences. Not even Eisenhower's wife, Mamie, knew that her husband was really preparing to lead an invasion force into North Africa; she was waiting for him in Washington.<sup>77</sup>

To keep himself busy in the days before the Allied landings in North Africa, Eisenhower dictated letters and designed plans for the next phase of operations. His staff

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<sup>76</sup>Stephen E. Ambrose, *The Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1970), 111.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

prepared a message to be delivered by the French General Henri Giraud. The message stated that Giraud had entered into an alliance with the Allies and urged the French army not to resist the landings. The message would be sent by radio to Giraud on the British submarine *Seraph*; where he was to approve the message so that it could be dropped by airplane into North Africa. A British admiral proposed issuing all statements in Giraud's name since he was, effectively, in Allied hands. Eisenhower rejected the proposal.<sup>78</sup>

Giraud had become important only one month before when Eisenhower's deputy commander, General Mark W. Clark, had secretly landed in North Africa. Robert Murphy, Roosevelt's consul in North Africa, had succeeded in arranging a meeting between pro-Allied French officers, led by General Charles E. Mast, and Allied representatives. Clark sought to assure the cooperation of underground French forces during the American invasion of French North Africa in November.<sup>79</sup> Mast promised to organize the French underground in support of the Allied invasion, but Mast and Clark disagreed on who should lead the invasion force.

Mast had told Murphy earlier that month that he favored French General Henri H. Giraud as commander of the Allied

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>79</sup>Tompkins, 43-47.

invasion force. Mast had opposed the idea of Giraud serving under Eisenhower and had proposed that Eisenhower retain command of the American forces while making Giraud Supreme Commander. Mast argued that with Giraud in command the Allies could take Algiers "practically without firing a shot."<sup>80</sup>

Giraud was favored so heavily by Mast because of his obvious anti-German credentials. Giraud had been taken as a prisoner of war by the Germans in both world wars successfully escaping both times. After his escape in the first world war, Giraud had dressed as a woman and a circus performer to hide from the Germans in Belgium.<sup>81</sup> Most recently he had escaped from Königstein castle in April by weaving together several sections of wire-filled rope smuggled to him in cans of ham.<sup>82</sup> He again evaded the German secret police before finally escaping to Switzerland and then to France. After he arrived at Vichy on April 27, he prepared a report for Marshal Pétain on the causes of the French defeat. Although Giraud blamed the defeat on moral grounds and favored an authoritarian regime, he continued to oppose Nazi Germany and he told Pétain that Germany could not win the war.<sup>83</sup> Because of this background, Mast favored

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<sup>80</sup>Ambrose, 105.

<sup>81</sup>Tompkins, 34.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Langer, 277-278.

Giraud over all other possible French leaders, but it was already too late.

By the time Mast put Giraud's name forward as supreme commander, Roosevelt had already chosen Eisenhower to lead the invasion force, making Giraud little more than an Allied puppet. Clark kept this to himself and dodged Mast's proposal, saying only that the Allies wanted to turn North Africa over to the French as quickly as possible. Clark did state, however, that a simultaneous Allied landing in southern France, which Giraud demanded, would not happen. An invasion of France would only come after the Allies secured North Africa.<sup>84</sup> Mast accepted this reply and committed the North African French resistance to the American cause. As a result, when Giraud boarded the *Seraph* en route to Gibraltar, he thought he was about to take command of the invasion force.

When Giraud arrived at Gibraltar on November 7, he immediately demanded to speak with Eisenhower. The French general walked into Eisenhower's cave and slapped a memo on his desk. In the memo, Giraud requested a radio transmitter, an airplane, some American staff officers, and facilities for a forward command post. Ignoring these demands, Eisenhower said he wanted Giraud to make a

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<sup>84</sup>Tompkins, 50.

statement that would be broadcast to Morocco and Algeria.<sup>85</sup>

An argument ensued. Eisenhower would later report:

Giraud initially refused to issue any statement for broadcast tonight, either from Gibraltar or from London or Washington. He insisted specifically that no radios should emanate from either national capital or from Allied Headquarters which would connect his name in any way with the operation in North Africa. Giraud flatly refused to participate in the operation in any other capacity than that of Supreme Commander. He insisted upon a position which would make him completely independent to carry out his own strategic and tactical conceptions....

Giraud is obsessed with the idea of an immediate move into France and implies that if he were made commander he would promptly use the entire air force coming into North Africa for the neutralization of Sardinia and to protect the transportation of troop into southern France; that he would transfer the fighter and bomber units thereafter to airfields in southern France.<sup>86</sup>

Eisenhower refused Giraud's proposals. This began six hours of discussions between Eisenhower and Giraud, during which Eisenhower repeatedly offered Giraud command of French forces in North Africa after the Allied forces had moved into Tunisia. Eisenhower even offered Giraud money to build an army and an air force. Giraud continued to refuse, demanding total command of the invasion force and at one point went so far as to say that, once he was made Supreme Commander, he would not be responsible to the Combined

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<sup>85</sup>Ambrose, 114.

<sup>86</sup>Langer, 338.



Chiefs of Staff in Washington D.C. As far as Giraud was concerned, Eisenhower could deal with the CCS on supply matters while Giraud directed the war. Eisenhower may have been willing to concede some points, but he certainly would not give up the position of supreme commander.<sup>87</sup> Nor did Giraud's goals, arguments, plans, or demeanor suggest that he would have made a successful Allied commander.

Even if he had wanted to, Eisenhower was in no position to surrender command of the Allied forces to any Frenchman. A great deal of planning and effort had gone into organizing the American-British invasion force. The whole campaign had been designed to coincide with a British advance from El Alamein, Egypt, upon German lines in Libya. Submitting to a commander who would drastically alter the battle plan would upset a whole range of contingency plans.<sup>88</sup>

Giraud's position was just as easily understandable. He had long worked on plans for leading an uprising in southern France and it was hard for him to abandon them. Furthermore, a foreign power was about to invade French territory in his name, yet he was granted no actual power. He was being asked to fight against the legitimate French government by younger commanders with less experience. Faced with these prospects, Giraud felt he deserved the

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<sup>87</sup>Ambrose, 114-115.

<sup>88</sup>Langer, 339-240.

position of Supreme Commander or, as he told Eisenhower at the end of their discussions, "Giraud will be a spectator in this affair."<sup>89</sup>

By the time the meeting between Eisenhower and Giraud ended, the first Allied forces were already going ashore. Reports reached Gibraltar that the surf along the Moroccan coast was low, allowing the American forces to go ashore. Soon afterwards came news that the landings at Oran had been unopposed, but there was still no reports from the forces which were landing in Algiers. Exhausted from the day's events, Eisenhower unfolded a cot in his office at 4:30 a.m. and went to sleep. He would be up again at 7:00 a.m.<sup>90</sup>

The final round of discussions with Giraud began at 10:00 a.m. when the French general returned to Eisenhower's command center. The Allied staff gave Giraud an exaggerated report of the invasion's success; in truth, the Allied Headquarters still lacked accurate reports of the ground action. After hearing these reports he entered Eisenhower's office. Eisenhower opened the meeting by telling Giraud that he could not serve two masters, both the CCS and Giraud. Giraud claimed he understood Eisenhower's position and did not want command of the air and sea forces, but again asked for command of the land forces. Eisenhower

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<sup>89</sup>Ambrose, 115.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 116.

again refused but offered to consult Giraud on all major decisions. Giraud finally accepted Eisenhower's proposals.<sup>91</sup>

In essence, Giraud accepted the very proposals advanced by Eisenhower the previous day, as Eisenhower's report to the CCS shows:

Giraud is recognized as the leader of the effort to prevent Axis aggression in North Africa, as the Commander-in-Chief of all French forces in the region and as governor of the French North African provinces. Eisenhower, as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied American-British forces, will co-operate with Giraud to the fullest possible extent, and will work in closest collaboration with him.

Giraud will leave Gibraltar tomorrow for North Africa, where he will do all in his power to stop all French resistance to the Allied forces and to begin the organization of French forces for use against the Axis.<sup>92</sup>

#### The North African Landings

In North Africa, the Allied forces met some resistance from French forces, although the degree of resistance varied greatly. The American and British forces landing at Oran and Algiers faced only light gunfire, but the American forces landing in Morocco met with aggressive French action. In large part this was due to the failure of the French conspirators to launch a successful pro-Allied uprising.

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 117.

<sup>92</sup>Langer, 340.

For example, in Morocco, one of the French generals aligned with Mast, General Jean Béthouart, arrested General Auguste Paul Noguès, the pro-Vichy Moroccan resident-general, in his home at midnight on November 8. Béthouart then left to aid the Americans forces coming ashore and organize a rebellion against Vichy. Béthouart, however, had left Noguès alone in his home in Rabat. Noguès phoned Casablanca and ordered the head of the French naval forces to resist the Allied landings.<sup>93</sup>

As a result, the Americans landing on the west coast faced heavy French resistance. Although the Americans gained a beachhead, they were unable to take Casablanca. The French battleship *Jean Bart*, docked in Casablanca harbor, opened fire upon American ships at sea. To protect the landing forces, American fighter planes had to bomb the *Jean Bart*, and other harbor defenses, and put the battleship out of commission.<sup>94</sup>

In Algiers, however, the French conspirators met with more success. On the night of November 7, armed groups of conspirators, dressed in the uniforms of Volontaires de Place (V.P), spread out across the city. At 9 p.m., General Mast ordered every police station in the city to install these V.P. units for "the protection of public order" due to the

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 343.

<sup>94</sup>Kenneth G. Crawford, *Report on North Africa* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1943), 29-31.

possibility of an enemy landing. Every one of the stations complied, letting the rebels easily seize control of the police force. By 1:45 a.m., the rebels even had control of divisional headquarters.<sup>95</sup>

The rebel action seemed a great success. The Frenchmen sent to seize the Centrale Protégée had taken the main telephone switchboard. Soon afterwards the post office, Radio Alger, and the censors' listening station were taken. Perhaps most importantly, the army's General Staff Headquarters fell to the conspirators, who confined the troops stationed there to their barracks. By 2:35 a.m. Algiers was solidly in rebel hands. Armed conspirators had seized control of important city buildings and had arrested every major official capable of ordering resistance.<sup>96</sup>

While the rebels were seizing control of the city, the American consul in Algiers, Robert Murphy, went to the home of General Alphonse Juin, the commander of French land and air forces in North Africa. Juin, surprised at Murphy's arrival, greeted the American consul wearing his pajamas and dressing gown.<sup>97</sup> Murphy informed Juin that an American expeditionary force of 500,000 men was landing on the Algerian coastline.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Tompkins, 77.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>97</sup>Crawford, 69.

<sup>98</sup>Langer, 346.

The news caught Juin unprepared. "What! You mean the convoy we have seen in the Mediterranean is going to land here?" the general asked. When Murphy replied that it was Juin responded, "But you told me only a week ago that the United States would not attack us." Murphy told Juin that the American forces were landing at French invitation and intended to work with the French toward the liberation of France.<sup>99</sup> "We hope for your cooperation, General, and the cooperation of the French forces here against the common enemy," Murphy told the French general. "German troops occupy the greater part of France. Only through our victory can France be free."<sup>100</sup>

"Were I the responsible commander here, I would accept your offer," Juin said. However, Admiral Darlan, Juin's superior, had arrived in Algiers from France that very week. Since Darlan could override any decision Juin made, the French general felt it necessary to consult the Admiral. Murphy agreed.<sup>101</sup>

Darlan had arrived in Algiers on November 5 after receiving news from Admiral Raymond Fenard that Darlan's son, Alain, was close to death. Alain had been struck with polio while working as a traveling salesman in Tunisia.

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>John MacVane, *Journey Into War* (New York: Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1943), 52.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

Although Alain's doctors told Darlan that his son's health had improved, the admiral insisted on staying in North Africa until November 10.<sup>102</sup>

Darlan had already approached the Americans about joining the Allied cause. He knew of the coming invasion and may have placed himself in North Africa for that very reason. It is clear that many high-ranking Vichy officials knew of the Allied plans in the weeks before the invasion. The same day that Murphy told Mast when the invasion would occur, one of the French North African conspirators cabled Darlan in Vichy. The cable said simply, "Date advanced. Landings imminent." Darlan's staff forwarded this message to Marshal Pétain. One French general, Jean Marie Bergeret, urged the marshal to go to North Africa and take command. The general argued that an Allied invasion would place the French North African commanders in an ambiguous situation. Pétain replied that one could not defend France by quitting it and he did not want "to abandon forty million Frenchmen."<sup>103</sup>

On November 6, word reached Vichy that Allied convoys had gathered at Gibraltar. General Bergeret immediately flew to North Africa and informed Darlan, at Alain's bedside, that the Allies planned to invade French North Africa. Darlan ignored the warning and claimed the convoys were headed for

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<sup>102</sup>Tompkins, 65.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 64.

Malta. After leaving Darlan, Bergeret visited Darlan's Algerian host, Admiral Fenard. Bergeret soon discovered that Fenard, who called Darlan to Algiers, also knew about the American landings.<sup>104</sup>

The evidence suggests that Darlan came to North Africa knowing full well the date of the Allied landings and that his son's health provided an excuse to leave France for Algiers.

Whatever brought Darlan to Algiers, Murphy had to deal with him. General Juin phoned Darlan's villa and informed Mme. Darlan that Murphy had an urgent message to deliver.<sup>105</sup> Murphy did not wait for the admiral long; Darlan arrived within twenty minutes. Murphy immediately told Darlan of the American landings.<sup>106</sup> If Darlan had known of the Allied operation before he had come to North Africa, he now seemed genuinely surprised. "I have known for a long time that the British were stupid, but I always believed that the Americans were more intelligent. I begin to believe that you make as many mistakes as they do," Darlan said.<sup>107</sup>

Murphy spent the next 15 minutes arguing with Darlan. Murphy tried every argument he could think of to induce Darlan to join the Americans, to persuade him to "seize this

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>106</sup>Langer, 346-347.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 347.



golden opportunity." But Darlan refused to believe the invasion was little more than a raid. He claimed that if the raid failed, the Germans would then invade North Africa, which would make matters that much worse for France. Darlan asked Juin to send his chief of staff to contact the navy to ascertain the size of the invasion.<sup>108</sup>

When Juin's chief of staff tried to leave he found the house surrounded by young men armed with rifles. The leader of the armed group claimed that only Murphy could leave the house.<sup>109</sup> At this point, Juin and Darlan considered themselves prisoners. Murphy claimed that he had not planned to draw Darlan into a trap and offered to send a vice-consul, Harvey Pendar, "to find out who had placed the watchdogs and have them called off."<sup>110</sup>

While Pendar went to find someone with enough authority to remove the guards, Murphy became involved in a political discussion with Juin and Darlan. They claimed that Murphy had misled them about the date of the American landings, that the Americans had come as allies, and that the Americans had come in the name of Giraud, a man with no legal authority. "He is not your man," Darlan said.

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<sup>108</sup>Tompkins, 83.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid.

"Politically he is a child. He's a good divisional commander, nothing more."<sup>111</sup>

Pendar returned to the house unable to find anyone who could order the guards away, but he brought back Admiral Fenard. Earlier in the evening, a French conspirator informed Fenard of the Algiers uprising and the admiral joined in at once. After meeting Pendar, Fenard agreed to try and convince Darlan to order a surrender.<sup>112</sup>

With Fenard present, Murphy tried a different approach. He argued that in July 1941 Darlan had told Admiral William Leahy, the U.S. ambassador to Vichy France, that the admiral would make himself available if the U.S. ever sent 500,000 soldiers and several thousand tanks and planes to Marseilles. "That moment has now arrived," Murphy said, "and it is your responsibility that no French blood will be shed incident to the massive landing of American forces which is now about to take place in French North Africa."<sup>113</sup>

Darlan was not prepared to go so far. He told Murphy that he had spent two years advocating obedience to Marshal Pétain. "I cannot now deny my oath," he explained. Murphy proposed that Darlan contact Pétain and ask for instructions. Darlan immediately drafted a message to Vichy

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 85-86.

<sup>113</sup>Langer, 347.

informing Pétain of the American landings and asking the marshal for freedom of action.<sup>114</sup>

After Darlan had finished writing the message, Fenard asked Pendar to deliver it to the Admiralty. Instead of delivering the message, Pendar drove to the pro-Allied rebel headquarters and steamed the envelope open. The message read:

Admiral Darlan to Marshal Pétain: I was summoned at 0115 this morning by General Juin and found with him Mr. Murphy who declared to me that on the demand of a Frenchman, General Giraud, President Roosevelt had decided to occupy French North Africa with important forces this very morning, to save France which they wished to maintain in its integrity.

I answered that France had signed an armistice convention and that I could but comply with the orders of the Marshal to defend its territories.<sup>115</sup>

After reading the message, the French rebels refused to send the cable. One of the rebel leaders told Pendar, "Tell Bob [Murphy] we cannot possibly forward this cable. It is not a matter of courtesy. It is giving the enemy a weapon."<sup>116</sup>

Pendar returned to Juin's house and found Murphy pacing in the gardens. Pendar quickly told Murphy the contents of Darlan's message, but Murphy wanted to know the location of

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 348.

<sup>115</sup>Tompkins, 89.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 88.

the American forces. While at rebel headquarters, Pendar heard a rumor that the Americans had landed at Cap Matifou. "What the devil are they doing out there, 30 miles from the city?" Murphy roared.

About this same time, one of the French rebel leaders, Jean Rigault, arrived to talk to Murphy. Rigault worried that the American troops might not arrive in time to support the rebel uprising. "I only guaranteed our operation for this one night," he said. "Your friends were supposed to be here at 2 a.m. Now they are three hours late. At 7 o'clock it will be daylight. I cannot answer for what will happen after that."<sup>117</sup>

The Americans had, in fact, landed fifteen miles east and west of Algiers. It took hours for the Allied troops to reach the city from their landing positions.<sup>118</sup> The American advance toward Algiers took longer than expected because French and Arab speaking soldiers were not included in every detachment.<sup>119</sup>

As long as the French rebels held the city, the Americans could enter Algiers from either the east or west without meeting resistance. Resistance could only occur if the Allies tried to enter the harbor, where the Vichy Admiralty

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 91.

<sup>118</sup>MacVane, 58.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 61.

building in French North Africa was located.<sup>120</sup>

Unfortunately, this was precisely what happened.

Less than an hour before Murphy and Rigault met, two British destroyers—the H.M.S. *Broke* and the H.M.S. *Malcolm*—attempted to sail through the harbor and land troops on the Quai de Dieppe.<sup>121</sup> As the two destroyers entered the harbor, they appeared on the French Admiralty's radar. The city lights went out and search lights began to sweep the harbor.<sup>122</sup>

A spotlight fell on one of the destroyers and the naval shore batteries opened fire. Until this time, most Vichy officers did not know that pro-Allied French rebels had taken control of the city, but the sound of cannon fire changed all that. With the start of the bombardment, Vichy officers began to report to their stations, but the rebels quickly took them into custody. This presented problems for the conspirators; they only numbered 400 men and could not guard a 12,000-man garrison with a 30,000-man reserve.<sup>123</sup>

Near 6:30 a.m., Admiral Fenard emerged from Juin's house with another message for Pétain. He approached Murphy and Pendar and asked about the first message. Pendar said he

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<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>121</sup>Tompkins, 90.

<sup>122</sup>MacVane, 57-58.

<sup>123</sup>Tompkins, 90.

had given it to others for transmission. Then he took the second message.<sup>124</sup>

Before Pendar left to send the second message, Murphy asked him to also send a message to the Allied commander. Murphy still worried about the absence of American soldiers. The message, directed to the Eastern Task Force Commander, read: "It is urgently necessary that some Allied troops arrive in the city of Algiers as quickly as possible. Situation well in hand but unwise to let this endure too long."<sup>125</sup>

As Pendar drove toward the house gates, 50 pro-Vichy forces arrived at Juin's residence. Armed with machine guns, these forces, called Gardes Mobiles, quickly chased away the poorly armed group of rebels.<sup>126</sup> They immediately placed Murphy under arrest and dragged Pendar from the car. The two diplomats stood with their hands above their heads while they were searched and their papers seized.<sup>127</sup> Darlan and Juin soon left for Fort l' Empereur, where they could organize the city's defense, but said they would talk with Murphy after they had more information about the American landings.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>Langer, 348-349.

<sup>127</sup>Tompkins, 96.

<sup>128</sup>Langer, 348-349.

Shortly after Darlan arrived at Fort l' Empereur to order resistance to the American landings, across town another group of Frenchmen planned the continuation of the rebel uprising. The Frenchmen at the rebel headquarters anxiously awaited the arrival of General Giraud. They had expected Giraud to land at the Blida airfield, southwest of Algiers, sometime after 6:30 a.m., but as time went on, it became clear that he was not coming. Even if he did arrive, it would take the general an hour to reach Algiers from Blida and the situation was rapidly deteriorating. Gardes Mobiles and other loyal Vichy troops, now alerted to the rebel plans, were taking back city offices.<sup>129</sup>

After some discussion, the rebels decided to broadcast an appeal from Giraud to the Algerian public. "It may rally the people and save the day before we are overwhelmed by the military," one of the rebel leaders argued.<sup>130</sup> Two conspirators immediately left rebel headquarters for a radio station still in rebel hands. Impersonating Giraud's voice, one of the conspirators read the appeal, hastily written at rebel headquarters, over Algiers radio.<sup>131</sup> The rebel impersonator claimed that he [Giraud] had arrived to assume

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<sup>129</sup>Tompkins, 98-99.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 99-100

<sup>131</sup>Ibid.

command of all French forces in North Africa and then urged the populace to support the American troops.

For the last two years you have scrupulously kept the terms of the armistice in spite of the repeated violations of our enemies. Today Germany and Italy want to occupy North Africa. America forestalls them and assures us of her loyal and disinterested support. This is our chance to revival. We cannot neglect this unexpected opportunity of recovery.

I take up my action station among you. I ask for your confidence. You have mine. We have one passion—France; and one aim—victory. Remember that the African army holds in its hands the fate of France.<sup>132</sup>

When American and British newspapers began reporting the African landings the next day, they would focus on the false Giraud announcement. In Giraud, the American press saw a crusading soldier fighting to restore democracy to a captive France. In a November 9 profile of Giraud, the *Washington Post* referred to the French general as a "legendary figure" and noted he did not have a command under "Pierre Laval's Nazi-cherishing regime" which gave him some popularity in the French resistance.<sup>133</sup>

The *London Times* also praised General Giraud in its November 9 editorial "Allied Assurances." The British newspaper told its readers that Vichy officials would

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<sup>132</sup>"Allies Speak To France: General Giraud's Appeal," *The Times* (London), 9 November 1942, 4.

<sup>133</sup>"Giraud Believed in African Revolt," *The Washington Post*, 9 November 1942, 7.



distort the purpose of the American invasion, "but it is not to them that Frenchmen can look for deliverance... The voice of the true France was heard in the ringing words of General Giraud yesterday morning and in those of General De Gaulle last night."<sup>134</sup>

Over the next several days, other newspapers published articles praising Giraud. On November 10, the *New York Times* acknowledged the French general's involvement in the editorial "The Mediterranean Front." The *Times* told readers that Giraud's support of the North African operation was "news of first importance." Giraud, having fought in North Africa before the war, could give the Allies important information about the territory they were operating in. "He commands enormous prestige in the French Army and his assumption of leadership of the Free French movement in North Africa cannot fail to aid our cause enormously."<sup>135</sup>

The *Baltimore Sun* also recognized Giraud in its Nov. 12 editorial, "Opportunity Knocks Again For France In Africa." The *Sun* argued that the American landings in North Africa provided the perfect opportunity for the French to abandon their neutrality and resume the war against the Germans and Italians. Noting that the French Government in 1940 did not

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<sup>134</sup>"Allied Assurances," *The Times* (London), 9 November 1942, 5.

<sup>135</sup>"The Mediterranean Front," *The New York Times*, 19 November 1942, 26.

continue the war from its colonies because it felt that Britain would also soon surrender, the *Sun* said this belief had been proved wrong. The U.S. could supply the arms to Frenchmen interested in using the colonies as a base of operations against the Axis. Moreover, the German occupation of all of France violated the terms of the armistice, which separated France into German and Vichy administered areas. This should, the paper said, change the minds of Frenchmen, like Pétain, who opposed renewing the war.<sup>136</sup>

The great question is whether those who speak for France in North Africa will join General Giraud and others in taking full advantage of the opportunity that presents itself. If they do, there will be more reason than ever to hope that the rigors of the extended occupation of metropolitan France will be of more limited duration.<sup>137</sup>

Walter Lippmann, a long-standing critic of the American French policy, gave some measure of support to Giraud in his November 12 column. Since the Allied invasion had destroyed Vichy in North Africa, Lippmann argued, the German invasion of unoccupied France had destroyed Vichy in Europe and a power vacuum had been created. The creation of a French provisional government was needed, not only for the Allies

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<sup>136</sup>"Opportunity Knocks For France In Africa," *The Baltimore Sun*, 12 November 1942, 16.

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*

to negotiate with, but also to organize armies, levy taxes, and mobilize French resources:<sup>138</sup>

It [the political void] can be filled only by leaders like General de Gaulle and General Giraud who are at once French and free and fighting. Surely it must be the immediate object of our policy of place at their disposal all the necessary facilities for prompt agreement on effective working arrangements. We must then hope and pray with all earnestness that no other consideration will enter their minds, or that of their colleagues, except to seize the glorious opportunity, which is now theirs, of mobilizing France for its fullest practical participation in the war.<sup>139</sup>

Aside from building up General Giraud's military and strategic knowledge, these newspapers point out that Giraud has no association with Vichy. In fact, media praised Giraud precisely because he didn't carry the taint of Vichy evil. The British press had condemned the Vichy government for taking France out of the war and leaving Britain alone. In America, the press attacked the U.S. government's continued relations with Vichy because it was a fascist-leaning, authoritarian government.

The media's praise for Giraud only reinforced the public's attitude that World War II was a moral crusade between democracy and totalitarianism. By not aligning with Vichy, Giraud seemed to represent the French ideals of

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<sup>138</sup>Walter Lippmann, "Today and Tomorrow," *The Washington Post*, 12 November 1942, 13.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*

liberty, equality and fraternity as opposed to Vichy collaboration. Each of the newspaper articles mentioning Giraud favorably contrasted him with Pétain, Laval, or other Vichy officials, or associated him (incorrectly) with de Gaulle and the Free French movement.

Indeed, during the same time frame that the British and American media welcomed Giraud, they also welcomed the passing of the Vichy system. On November 9, the *New York Times* stated that the American landings would inspire the French people to overthrow the fascist Vichy Government. Although the "renegade" Laval and the "befuddled" Pétain may confuse the French public and drive Frenchmen into joining the Axis, "any such success for the betrayers of France will be of short duration... the French people will hear and answer the summons of de Gaulle, the real leader of France in this hour of crisis."<sup>140</sup>

As further evidence of this public attitude, the *Times* made a careful distinction between the Vichy Government and the French people the very next day.<sup>141</sup>

We are not at war *with* France. We are at war *for* France. War with Pierre Laval or with any one who obeys his orders, or with the man in Berlin from whom he takes his orders, is not war with France...

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<sup>140</sup>"The Great Offensive," *The New York Times*, 9 November 1942, 22.

<sup>141</sup>"No War With France," *The New York Times*, 10 November 1942, 26.

To all true Frenchmen, to that vast suffering, betrayed majority of occupied and unoccupied France alike, we hold out our hands as friends and comrades.

We hope to march with them, not against them, and to see their flag carried with our own when the troops of the United Nations parade in final victory. In the light of that hope we fight in Africa and we dismiss an Ambassador whose instructions, whether or not he wished them so, came to him, via Vichy, from Berlin.<sup>142</sup>

However much British and American public opinion disapproved of Vichy, on the morning of November 8 it was still very much a force for the Allies to reckon with. In Algiers, Murphy and Pendar were Vichy prisoners, but Pendar still had Darlan's second message to Pétain. Admiral Fenard arranged to have Pendar deliver Darlan's second message to Pétain to the Admiralty. After the Admiralty's commanding officer confirmed that the message had originated from Darlan, it was forwarded to Pétain.<sup>143</sup> By 9 a.m., Darlan received Pétain's reply. "I have received your message via the Admiralty," Marshal Pétain said. "I am happy that you are there. You may act and inform me. You know you have my full confidence."<sup>144</sup>

By the time Darlan received Pétain's message, Vichy troops had reestablished control in Algiers. The Garde

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<sup>142</sup>Ibid.

<sup>143</sup>Tompkins, 97.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 105.

Mobile had scattered the French rebels and taken back key city buildings, but Darlan knew American troops waited just outside the city. In another message to Pétain sent shortly before noon, Darlan said the city could fall to the Allies by nightfall.<sup>145</sup>

At 4:30 p.m., Juin learned that the Americans were near the city. He could either abandon the city, leaving Darlan to deal with the political situation, or stay and be surrounded. Darlan phoned to ask Juin to stay in the city and negotiate a cease-fire for Algiers. "There is no point having people killed uselessly," Darlan said. "Let us not prolong a resistance which is hopeless." Juin now ordered all French forces to withdraw toward Fort l' Empereur in order to avoid conflict with the American troops entering the city.<sup>146</sup> Juin then called Murphy and asked him to contact the American commander, General Charles Ryder, to tell him that the French were prepared to surrender the city.<sup>147</sup>

#### The Surrender of North Africa

Eisenhower sent Gen. Mark Clark to Algiers the next day, November 9, 1942. Having learned of Darlan's presence in

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<sup>145</sup>Ibid.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>147</sup>Langer, 349.

Algiers shortly after 9:00 a.m., Eisenhower told Clark to come to terms with Darlan. If the French admiral was willing to cooperate, the North African campaign would become infinitely easier. Roosevelt and Churchill had essentially sent Eisenhower to North Africa with a small, untrained army. It would be difficult for the Allied forces to fight both the French and the Axis forces. If the Spanish decided to intervene in North Africa on the Axis side, then the Allied operation would be over.

In order to offset these military disadvantages, and to save lives, Eisenhower was prepared to take advantage of the opportunity Darlan presented. Darlan held an established position in the Vichy government, as commander in chief of the French armed forces, and could legally order French soldiers to join the Allies. Any soldier following a similar order from Giraud, who had no such authority, would be committing mutiny.<sup>148</sup>

General Ryder first met Darlan at the admiral's headquarters, at the Hotel Saint-Georges, at 8 p.m. on November 8. Juin, Fenard and various other French officers also arrived for the meeting. The American contingent, however, arrived late. Murphy first had a long meeting with the French resistance leaders. The conspirators had placed all their hopes on Giraud, who had still not arrived, but

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<sup>148</sup>Ambrose, 120.

now the Americans were negotiating with Darlan. Moreover, many of the French rebels were now in jail or feared retribution.<sup>149</sup> Murphy had to deal with these issues and discuss what actions the conspirators should take next.

As a result, Murphy and Ryder did not arrive at the Hotel Saint-Georges until 10 p.m., but the parties wasted no time. Ryder immediately suggested that Darlan extend the cease-fire to all of North Africa, but the admiral hesitated, saying he needed to consult Pétain before making commitments outside of Algiers. Ryder also claimed that he could not speak without first consulting General Clark. Ryder wanted to settle the Algerian situation and move his men into Tunisia, leaving Algiers under French administration. "Under what government?" Darlan asked. Ryder replied that he expected to find an insurrectionary, anti-Vichy government but further developments had to wait until the arrival of General Clark.<sup>150</sup> And so November 8 closed without any real progress toward a total surrender of French North Africa.

Despite the lack of a firm cease-fire agreement, the Allied press treated the opening of the North African front positively. For the Americans, nearly a year had passed between the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, and the

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<sup>149</sup>Tompkins, 109.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., 110.



subsequent U.S. entrance into the war, and the beginning of any significant campaign against the Germans and Italians. While the media did not pretend that the North African landings represented the opening of a major front against the Axis, they did recognize it as an important first step toward Allied landings in Europe. The Allied media also recognized how the Africa landings reassured an anxious world about the American and English commitment to the war. The language the media used to frame this campaign illustrates how deeply the public had come to perceive World War II as a moral conflict.

The *Washington Post* in its November 9 editorial "The Hour Has Struck" graphically comments on the fighting in French North Africa. "At last the hour has arrived for the stroke of the moment against the monstrous tyranny which has set the entire world in flames," the *Post* wrote. "The fear had been growing that the hour would never come."<sup>151</sup>

The *Post* told its readers that the landings in North Africa represented the first time that viewers can discern a coordinated effort by the Allies to fight the Axis. Until this point, the paper claims, it appeared as if the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union were fighting isolated, defensive wars. But the African campaign illustrated the efforts of the "grand alliance" to attack

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<sup>151</sup>"The Hour has Struck," *The Washington Post*, 9 November 1942, 8.

the Axis on one front in order to aid an ally on another front.<sup>152</sup>

The timing is perfect. As Stalin said on Friday, Hitler's time schedule has been thrown completely out of kilter. That schedule—revised after the failure to capture Moscow last year—called weeks ago for the annihilation of the Red Army. But the Red Army is still intact. It is not only intact: it is also strong enough at any time to go on a counter-offensive in concert with the Allied plan in Africa.<sup>153</sup>

The *New York Times* offered a similar evaluation in its November 9 editorial "The Great Offensive." The *Times* tells readers that history will record November 7 as the beginning of the Allied offensive against the Axis powers. Despite the dangers the North African landings may bring, "we know now that we are no longer merely hitting back on the defensive." Moreover, the paper says, the North African campaign proves three things: that America is prepared to sacrifice its own for an Allied victory, is strong enough to fight two fronts at once (in Europe and in the Pacific), and has enough men stationed in Europe to open a major offensive.<sup>154</sup>

The impact of these moral factors will reach far and wide. From this demonstration of our power

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<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid.

<sup>154</sup>"The Great Offensive," *The New York Times*, 9 November 1942, 22.

and our purpose the conquered peoples of Europe, impatient for the day when they can turn with fury on the Nazi beast, will draw fresh strength and courage. Our Russian allies, fighting superbly, and for the most part alone, through so many months, will see in the arc that reaches from North Africa to Southern Europe the shape of the Second Front which they have urged us to establish. The few still hesitant and still skeptical nations in our own hemisphere will find fresh evidence of the strength of our commitment to destroy the military power of Hitler's Germany.<sup>155</sup>

In London, predictably, the African landings were also warmly welcomed. Not only did capturing French North Africa give the Allies access to the Mediterranean, shorting supply routes to posts throughout the British Empire, but it also placed the German Africa Corps between two Allied armies. The American army in West Africa and the British army in Egypt, the *London Times* tells readers, now opens the prospect of total defeat of the German forces in Africa:

The prospect is now opening of establishing allied power along the whole coast of North Africa, so as to confront, across a comparatively narrow sea, all the southern shores of enslaved Europe, and threaten by many possible routes the ultimate blows at the heart of Germany.<sup>156</sup>

In the Soviet Union, it was reported that the news of the North African landings provided a moral boost for Red Army troops. Several days after the landings, Stalin wrote to an

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<sup>155</sup>Ibid.

<sup>156</sup>"The New Front," *The Times (London)*, 9 November 1942, 5.

A.P. correspondent and expressed his pleasure with the North African campaign:<sup>157</sup>

The African campaign refutes again the skeptics who affirm that the Anglo-American leaders cannot organize a serious war campaign. No one but first rate organizers could carry on such serious war operations as the successful landings in North Africa across the ocean, as the quick occupation of harbors and wide territories and as smashing of the Italo-German armies being effected so masterfully.<sup>158</sup>

While the media was busy congratulating the American forces in Africa, negotiations for a cease-fire in French North Africa continued in Algiers. Ryder resumed discussions with Darlan at 5:30 p.m. on November 9. The meeting had been scheduled for earlier in the day, but Ryder, hoping that General Clark would arrive, kept postponing the meeting. Finally Ryder decided he could wait no longer and returned to the Hotel Saint-Georges.<sup>159</sup>

Once at Darlan's headquarters, Ryder presented the admiral with two armistice agreements. One was lenient, while the other called for disarming the French soldiers and confining them to barracks. Juin, who was also in attendance, argued that French soldiers would need their

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<sup>157</sup>Alexander Werth, *Russia at War, 1941-1945* (New York: Dutton, 1964), 491.

<sup>158</sup>Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 96.

<sup>159</sup>Tompkins, 113.

weapons in order to defend themselves against the Germans. One French general offered to confine his troops to quarters if Ryder allowed the soldiers to keep their weapons. Darlan liked the suggestion and added that all munitions, except those needed "for the maintenance of order," be placed under American guard.<sup>160</sup>

This seemed to indicate that some progress was being made, but Ryder needed Darlan to commit to a cease-fire in all of North Africa. To force the issue, Ryder proposed letting French ships fly their own flag and retaining the regular North African administration. Darlan immediately asked if the U.S. was prepared to recognize Vichy authority in North Africa. Again, Ryder said he could not answer without consulting General Clark.<sup>161</sup>

Luckily, during Ryder's meeting with Darlan, Clark finally landed in North Africa. Upon arrival, the general immediately went to the Hotel Saint-Georges, arriving only an hour after the conference had begun.<sup>162</sup>

Clark tried to get a cease-fire by claiming that 150,000 Allied troops were ashore. Actually, only 3,400 soldiers had landed by this time.<sup>163</sup> In any case, Darlan and Juin would not submit and complained that the landings had taken

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<sup>160</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid.

them by surprise. Darlan also stated that had the Americans waited two weeks, a Vichy proposal securing French cooperation in a similar operation would have been advanced.<sup>164</sup>

Since Clark felt that no serious options had been advanced he broke off discussions for the evening, proposing another session in the morning. The Americans did not take the manila envelope containing the harsher of the two armistice agreements with them. After studying it, Darlan asked the opinion of the assembled officers. The staff told the admiral that French resistance was futile and urged him to accept the lenient terms. At 8:30 p.m., Darlan sent a cable to Pétain notifying the Marshal of the situation.

Negotiations between Clark and Darlan resumed at 10:00 a.m. the next morning. As Darlan pretended to review the armistice terms (which he already knew), Murphy said, "Time is pressing, General Clark intends to settle the political question. Are you ready, Admiral, to have hostilities cease in North Africa?" Darlan explained that he had sent messages to Pétain and would have to wait for instructions. This angered Clark who told Darlan, through an interpreter:

Tell him that Pétain is nothing in our young lives. He has today broken relations with the United States and declared this landing as an act hostile to France. He ordered resistance. As far

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<sup>164</sup>Langer, 352.

as we're concerned, we don't recognize any authority of Pétain in North Africa.<sup>165</sup>

But Darlan still refused to sign an armistice. The admiral offered to send another message to Vichy but Murphy demanded a settlement in 30 minutes. Clark threatened to have Giraud sign the armistice. "Do you want Giraud without the Army or the Army without Giraud?" Darlan asked. Juin explained that Giraud had no power or influence in North Africa; the French generals still organizing resistance in Morocco and Tunisia would not follow Giraud. "In that case," Murphy told Darlan, "General Clark is going to find it necessary to take you under his protection."<sup>166</sup>

Clark rose to end the meeting but Juin begged for five minutes alone with Darlan. Clark agreed and the American delegation left the room. Eight minutes later Fenard emerged from the room to announce that Darlan had agreed to surrender North Africa. The Americans re-entered the room and found Darlan writing a message ordering the various French military chiefs in North Africa to end hostilities with the Americans.<sup>167</sup> Darlan told Clark:

In the name of the marshal, I [Darlan] assume authority in North Africa. The present military chiefs retain their commands and the political

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<sup>165</sup>Ibid., 353.

<sup>166</sup>Tompkins, 120.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid., 121.

structure and administration remain intact. No changes may be effected until further orders from me.<sup>168</sup>

Darlan notified Vichy of his decision at once. Pétain initially approved of Darlan's actions, but the Germans had intercepted Darlan's telegram and intended to force Pétain to repudiate Darlan. The Vichy Premier, Pierre Laval, was in Germany to meet with Hitler when the Allied invasion of North Africa occurred. When shown the telegram, Laval immediately called Pétain and threatened to resign if Pétain supported Darlan. Fearing German reprisal, Pétain disavowed Darlan on the grounds he was a prisoner and named General Auguste Paul Noguès, the resident-general in Morocco, commander-in-chief of North Africa. At the same time, Pétain sent a second message to Darlan through secret channels. This message expressed the marshal's approval of Darlan's actions.<sup>169</sup>

The news of Darlan's removal from office was made public before Pétain's secret message arrived. Clark returned to the Hotel Saint-Georges to ensure Darlan's continued cooperation. But Darlan claimed he would have to cancel the armistice.<sup>170</sup> Clark threatened to arrest Darlan and his staff but Darlan still would not commit. Luckily, Darlan

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<sup>168</sup>Ibid.

<sup>169</sup>Langer, 353.

<sup>170</sup>Ambrose, 121.



received Pétain's secret message and decided to let the cease-fire stand.<sup>171</sup>

The events of the next day, November 11, seemed to remove any doubts from Darlan's mind. Hitler ordered the German armies to march into unoccupied France. By that afternoon, Darlan released a statement claiming that the Germans had broken the armistice and had taken Pétain prisoner.<sup>172</sup> Since Darlan was "faithful to the marshal's inner thoughts,"<sup>173</sup> he would assume the powers of government in Pétain's name. Darlan reaffirmed the cease-fire orders and urged the French officials in Tunisia to resist German landings (the Axis had begun sending men and materials to Tunisia as early as November 9).<sup>174</sup>

Noguès arrived from Morocco in the afternoon of the following day, November 12, and proceeded to Fenard's villa, where Darlan still resided. Seeing that Darlan was free to act on his own, Noguès restored full command to the admiral.

At 6:00 p.m., Darlan, Noguès, and the other French principals again met Clark at the Hotel Saint-Georges. While Noguès expressed his relief that the fighting was over, he only wanted to grant the Americans the right of passage through Morocco. The general wanted to send an

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<sup>171</sup>Langer, 354.

<sup>172</sup>Langer, 355.

<sup>173</sup>Tompkins, 124.

<sup>174</sup>Ambrose, 121.

emissary back to Vichy to determine if the marshal wished the North African army to join the Allied cause. "Please impress it upon General Noguès, once and for all," Clark said to Pendar, who was acting as interpreter, "that there can be no question of communicating with Vichy. We have broken relations with that government. In our eyes it no longer exists."<sup>175</sup>

Noguès turned to leave, but Darlan held him in place. Darlan requested a private meeting between himself, Noguès and Clark. Once alone, Noguès insisted that Giraud be left out of any further arrangements. "There was a General Giraud," Noguès said. "There is no more." Clark, increasing exasperated by the changing French attitude, read an ultimatum from Eisenhower. If the French did not come quickly to terms, the Americans would either put Giraud in full command of North Africa or rule by military decree.<sup>176</sup>

Clark then demanded to reread the ultimatum with Giraud present. When Giraud entered the room with his hand out, Noguès placed his behind his back and said, "I will not speak to a rebel general." Unwittingly, he then said, "*Bon jour*," and then muttered "*traître*." At this point, Juin spoke up, "*Assez de votre sale politique*. We are going to fight the Germans." Noguès then agreed to go halfway toward

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<sup>175</sup>Tompkins, 127.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid.

meeting the American demands. While still claiming the French couldn't join the Allied cause without some period of neutrality first, he suggested that Giraud lead a volunteer corps to fight with the Allies. Again the French argued, but Clark decided to end it. Clark promised to recognize Darlan as the chief political official over North Africa and Noguès as the chief political official in Morocco.<sup>177</sup>

The leaders of the North African rebels—Jacques Lemaigre-Dubreuil, Jacques Saint-Hardouin, and Jean Rigault—arrived at Murphy's office early on Friday, November 13. They argued that the Americans had disregarded their previous promises to Giraud in favor of making a deal with Darlan. They demanded that Giraud become commander of the armed forces to balance Darlan's political power. Murphy took the group to see Clark, who claimed he had no objection to their proposal. But after his struggle to get the French to agree to the current terms, Clark said the French needed to work the matter out among themselves. Moreover, because Eisenhower was on his way to Algiers, the matter had to be decided that morning.<sup>178</sup>

The French rebel leaders went to the Hotel Saint-Georges in one last attempt to bring the various factions together. Once there, they encountered not only General Giraud, but

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<sup>177</sup>Ibid., 128.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 129.

General Noguès and General Juin. Dubreuil quickly asked Juin to soothe the waters. "Come, come, *mon général*," Juin said to Noguès, "we can't abandon a five-star comrade with such a tiny command. It's a question of France. Let us all march together. I am ready to place myself at Giraud's orders."<sup>179</sup>

By now Noguès not only had time to calm down, but had seen Pétain's secret messages to Darlan expressing the marshal's approval of the admiral's actions. Noguès said he would support handing Giraud command of the army if three conditions were met: that de Gaulle never set foot in North Africa, that Giraud recognize Darlan's authority, and that Giraud hold his command in Pétain's name. Giraud agreed. A messenger hurried to Clark and told him, "Everything is set. They all agree. Giraud has given up his corps of volunteers and assumes command of the Army. France is no longer neutral. She is with the Allies." Clark happily drove out to the Maison Blanche airport to meet Eisenhower. He could tell his commander that he had succeeded in his mission; he had secured French cooperation.<sup>180</sup>

After lunch, Clark took Eisenhower to the Hotel Saint-Georges where the commander-in-chief discussed the current military and political situation with Clark and his staff.

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<sup>179</sup>Ibid., 130.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid.

Murphy arrived with a copy of the Clark-Darlan agreement after the meeting had begun. In effect, the agreement gave the Allies control of airports, harbors, port defenses and fortifications. The agreement also gave the Allies broad emergency powers in case of social breakdown and disorder. In return, the Americans recognized the current political structure and promised to supply food to the North African colonies.<sup>181</sup>

Eisenhower could have vetoed the agreement. By this time, Allied troops occupied key positions in French North Africa and many competent Gaullists in England could have administered the colonies. But Murphy claimed that only Darlan and the Vichyites could ensure order in the French colonies. In addition, Darlan seemed most likely to bring the port of Dakar in French West Africa over to the Allied side. Most importantly, Eisenhower needed to move into Tunisia to deal with the massing Axis troops and Rommel's Afrika Korps. He couldn't afford to leave troops behind to secure the rear.<sup>182</sup>

Eisenhower asked Murphy for advice but the diplomat now seemed reluctant to give it. "The whole matter has now become a military one. You will have to give the final answer," Murphy said. Eisenhower accepted the agreement on

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<sup>181</sup>Ambrose, 126.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 125.

the basis that, "we [the Allies] have no legal or other right arbitrarily to establish... a puppet government of our own choosing." In stating this position, Eisenhower conveniently forgot his own plans to establish an American-supported government headed by Giraud.<sup>183</sup>

Darlan and the other French commanders (including Giraud, Noguès, and Juin) arrived at the Hotel Saint-Georges at 2:00 p.m. Eisenhower informed the group that he had accepted the Clark-Darlan agreement and as the representative of the British and American governments, he acknowledged Darlan as the highest civil authority in North Africa. Eisenhower said he had but one demand, that the French fully join the Allied cause and attack the Germans. Darlan agreed but then said he also had one demand, that metropolitan France be liberated and reconstructed. Eisenhower, of course, agreed but said he expected French help in liberating France.<sup>184</sup>

And so the agreement between Eisenhower and Darlan was approved. That evening, Darlan began issuing orders as Marshal Pétain's successor. As agreed, he proclaimed all French North African territories in a state of war against Germany and Italy since they had broken the Armistice agreement and invaded Unoccupied France.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>185</sup>De Montmorency, 161-162.

Meanwhile, Eisenhower had flown back to Gibraltar to send a message notifying the Combined Chiefs of Staff about the arrangements with Darlan. This message alarmed the CCS, particularly the British. Many of the British officers felt it was morally wrong to cut deals with men who collaborated with Hitler, as Darlan had. Many of those who had sided with Churchill early in the struggle against fascism asked the prime minister, "Is this then what we are fighting for?"<sup>186</sup>

But the Darlan Deal also raised political considerations. Charles de Gaulle's Free French movement had been left out of the planning for the North African landings because of local sentiment, and because President Roosevelt disliked him. Giraud was chosen as the Allied point man for the North African operation precisely because he had no Vichy connections. Churchill felt he could convince de Gaulle to support Giraud, but de Gaulle would never support Darlan, who was an outspoken critic of the Free French movement.<sup>187</sup>

Not long after Eisenhower had notified the CCS of the North African arrangement, he was informed of the British reaction. Eisenhower knew he had to justify the Darlan Deal; if he did not, President Roosevelt could dissolve the agreement. In addition, there was the question of the

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<sup>186</sup>Ambrose, 127.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid.

Soviets. Would Stalin conclude that the U.S. and the U.K. were prepared to cut deals with Nazi collaborators, leaving the Soviet Union to fight Germany alone?<sup>188</sup> Eisenhower's full report, sent the morning of November 14, provides excellent insight into the Supreme Commander's thinking.

Despite American efforts to minimize French resistance to the Allied landings, Eisenhower claimed the Vichy regime was well entrenched in North Africa. The entire French resistance had been based on the belief that Pétain opposed the invasion. "The military and naval leaders, as well as the civil governors, agree that only one man has the obvious right to assume the mantle of Pétain and that man is Admiral Darlan," Eisenhower argued.<sup>189</sup>

By securing a cease-fire through Darlan, Eisenhower wrote, the American goals could be advanced more quickly. Continued French resistance would only delay the American advance on the German lines in Tunisia. In addition, keeping the existing French administration intact meant that few Allied troops would be left behind to preserve order. "In Morocco alone," Eisenhower said, "General Patton estimates 60,000 Allied troops would be required to control the Moroccan tribes."<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>188</sup>Ibid., 128.

<sup>189</sup>Langer, 357-359.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid.



I assure you that only after incessant examination of the important factors have these agreements been made. They are essential in order to get on with the military objectives against the Axis and advance the interests of the Allies in winning this war.<sup>191</sup>

Eisenhower then asked that a public statement be withheld for a short while. Giraud had proved unpopular among French officers in North Africa. It was thought best to let the French deal with the issue before the Allies made an announcement.<sup>192</sup>

Upon receiving Eisenhower's report, the CCS forwarded it to President Roosevelt, then at his home in Hyde Park, New York. According to Office of War Information official Robert Sherwood, who was present when the president received the report, "Roosevelt was deeply impressed by it and, as he read it with the same superb distribution of emphasis that he used in his public speeches, he sounded as if he were making an eloquent plea for Eisenhower before the bar of history."<sup>193</sup>

Eisenhower had also sent the report to Prime Minister Churchill. "Please be assured," Eisenhower prefaced the message, "that I have too often listened to your sage advice to be completely handcuffed and blindfolded by all the

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<sup>191</sup>Ibid.

<sup>192</sup>Ambrose, 127.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., 129.

slickers with which this part of the world is so thickly populated."

Churchill too was impressed by Eisenhower's reasoning.<sup>194</sup> And so the Supreme Commander secured his needed support in the upper echelons of the Allied leadership. The next day, November 15, Darlan made his public proclamation and the public learned the full extent of the Clark-Darlan Deal:

Since the invasion of the free zone against which he protested as solemnly as circumstances permitted, the Marshal finds it impossible to make known his intimate thoughts to the French. All means of communication are, moreover, under German control. The Marshal telegraphed me on November 9th that he was satisfied with my presence in Africa. He gave me renewed assurance of his complete confidence. On November 11th, believing me deprived of my liberty he delegated authority to General Noguès. On November 13th General Noguès recognizing my complete liberty of action returned to me, with the approval of the Marshal, the powers which had devolved on him. Under these conditions I declare: Legionnaires, officials of all ranks, officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates of the army, navy and air-force of Africa who have taken the oath of fidelity to the Marshal should consider that they are faithful to the Marshal in executing my orders.

I take upon myself sole responsibility for this decision, which has only the single object of assuring the good of the Empire and the national unity.

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<sup>194</sup>Ibid.

I have designated as military Commander a great soldier, General Henri Giraud, who has always served France with honor.

ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET DARLAN.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup>De Montmorency, 162.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PUBLIC REACTS

Until the time of Eisenhower's agreement with Darlan, the press coverage of the North African campaign had been overwhelmingly positive. As seen in the editorials covering the first few days after the North African landings, the Allied media routinely characterized the campaign as proof of the United States' commitment to the defeat of dictatorial Axis regimes, the restoration freedom and hope to occupied nations, and support of other allied nations. The news of the Darlan Deal quickly ended these favorable characterizations.

The American and British press immediately characterized the Darlan Deal as an abandonment of the principles embodied in Roosevelt's Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter. These statements were supposed to provide the moral reasons for which the war was being fought. Instead of discrediting fascists by defeating them militarily, the Allies were now reaching accommodations with them. To the press, this smacked of the appeasement policies the British and French governments had followed prior to the war. Then, granting Hitler many of his territorial and political desires, no matter how illegal or unprincipled those desires might be, the Allies had sought to prevent war.

These arguments appeared on the editorial pages of many American newspapers between November 12 and November 18. In a sampling of 12 major American newspapers, the Darlan Deal was discussed in a total of 12 editorials, syndicated columns and letters to the editor. Ten of these opinion pieces expressed outright opposition to the Darlan Deal; only two opinion pieces portrayed the Darlan Deal favorably.

Similar negative feelings were expressed towards Darlan himself. In the same 12 newspapers, 14 columns, editorials or letters to the editor appeared which directly discussed Admiral Darlan. All 14 of these opinion pieces portrayed Darlan unfavorably.

Darlan had not only collaborated with Hitler, but he also helped establish an authoritarian system within his own country. The Darlan Deal potentially set an important precedent: that collaborators and fascists who came over to the Allied side would be rewarded. Eventually, these collaborators might set up fascist regimes after the war, allowing the immoral practices of these governments to continue.

The *New York Post* argued these very points in its lead editorial on Monday, November 16, the day after the announcement of the Eisenhower-Darlan Deal. The *Post* argued that the United States must immediately dispose of Darlan, who must not hold a position of importance, even temporarily. Supporting Darlan threatened to undermine the

Allies' moral position. The Allies advocated a complete destruction of fascism, which they had begun to pursue by invading Africa. The invasion destroyed the Vichy administration in North Africa and crippled it in metropolitan France. By supporting Darlan, America showed a weakness of purpose:<sup>196</sup>

We have made a magnificent start in Africa. As word of it sifts through the nets of nazidom it brings hope and resolution to millions. They must not hear that in our next move we got off on the wrong foot, that we were marching in step with such a one as Darlan.

Down with Darlan!<sup>197</sup>

The *Christian Science Monitor* discussed the moral implications of the Darlan Deal in a November 16 editorial titled "Darlan." On the surface, the Darlan Deal seemed to sacrifice many basic principles, the paper said. The French admiral, as a member of the Vichy Government, supported a system of government directly opposed to the American one.

How can the Vichy order be so quickly dispelled? Is there no moral principle in this struggle? Are we going to take in any turncoat Fascist and reward him? If this is political warfare, what does it do to those Frenchmen who have held the

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<sup>196</sup>"Down with Darlan," *The New York Post*, 16 November 1942, 21.

<sup>197</sup>*Ibid.*

front lines of resistance to Hitler and his puppets?<sup>198</sup>

After raising these questions, the *Christian Science Monitor* then urged its readers to refrain from judgment until all the facts about the North African situation had become known. For instance, the paper said, perhaps Darlan broke with Vichy and had gone to Africa for refuge. Perhaps, Vichy planned to re-enter the war, as Pétain's statement that Germany had broken the armistice suggested, and Darlan was only carrying out the marshal's wishes.<sup>199</sup>

No one can morally support any sort of relations with Darlan, the paper argued, but war is "seldom a matter of simple morality... it often appears to offer only a choice between evils." Until the reasons for Eisenhower's agreement with Darlan are explained, one cannot yet tell if the deal was justified.<sup>200</sup> Despite the paper's reluctance to take a position, it certainly helped legitimize public concern by claiming the moral issues involved were truly important.

The strongest criticism that emerged in the days immediately following the announcement came from the political arena. Roosevelt's 1940 Republican presidential

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<sup>198</sup>"Darlan?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16 November 1942, 22.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid.

challenger, Wendell Willkie, intended to publicly condemn the arrangement during a speech at the *New York Herald Tribune* Forum on Current Problems on November 16.<sup>201</sup> When Willkie released the text of his speech to the press, it contained a harsh protest of negotiations with fascists:

Shall we in America be quiet, for instance, when our leaders after promising freedom to the French people, put into control over them the very man who has helped to enslave them? Shall we be quiet when we see our government's long appeasement of Vichy find its logical conclusion in our collaboration with Darlan, Hitler's tool? Such collaboration outrages the spirit of free people everywhere, whatever expediency dictated it. I tell you we cannot fight this war in silence, whatever our experts say. Because if we fight in silence, those same experts will, in the end, even winning the war, win nothing but blood and ashes.<sup>202</sup>

Before Willkie could deliver the speech, however, Secretary of War Henry Stimson called and asked him to remove any reference to Darlan. The request angered Willkie, but although his speech had already been released, he only condemned the "State Department's long appeasement of Vichy."<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup>Ellsworth Barnard, *Wendell Willkie: Fighter for Freedom* (Marquette, Michigan: Northern Michigan University Press, 1966), 393.

<sup>202</sup>*Ibid.*, 393.

<sup>203</sup>"Text of Willkie's Address Calling for Early Agreement on War Aims," *The New York Times*, 17 November 1942, 20.



Even without the direct reference to Darlan, Willkie criticized American North African policy. Throughout the speech, however, Willkie made reference to the need to define and assure adherence to the moral principles of the war, such as those in the Atlantic Charter. To let such matters rest until after the war risked losing the very things the United States fought for. "Even if war leaders apparently agree upon principles," Willkie said, "when they come to the peacetime—they make their own interpretations of their previous declarations."<sup>204</sup>

Since the Atlantic Charter committed the Allies to destroying fascist regimes, and the United States had recognized a fascist government in North Africa to gain military advantage, the United States had reinterpreted its own declarations of principle. Willkie had criticized the Darlan Deal without mentioning it.

More newspapers joined in the attack on the Darlan Deal on November 17. As in the previous days' editorials, the newspapers based their opposition to the Eisenhower-Darlan agreement on moral grounds. The *Chicago Sun*, in the editorial "The Cloud Over Africa," argued that deals with fascists threatened to break the anti-Nazi alliance apart. All the Allied groups that had fought with the U.S. against

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<sup>204</sup>Ibid.

the fascists must now wonder how much faith they could place in American statements.

In this Africa affair we have treated with great disdain the Fighting French forces throughout the world, the Fighting French National Committee and its head, General de Gaulle, in London—men who have unfalteringly maintained the fight against Hitler since the fall of France. Having assured the world only a few days ago that at last we were really through with Vichy, we have set up what may turn out to be a new Vichy regime in Africa. General de Gaulle expresses the suspicion of many when he divorces the Fighting French from negotiations with Darlan and warns that a new Vichy regime will not be accepted by his movement.

There are here seeds, moreover, of future deep impairment of American-Soviet relations. Russia has officially recognized the Fighting French National Committee. If we persist in fostering a reactionary French regime headed by a Vichyite, there is reason to expect that within France—where sentiment is overwhelmingly anti-Vichy—we shall produce a swing toward Communism. The menace to American-Russian teamwork need not be labored here...<sup>205</sup>

A milder form of criticism emerged from the *New York Herald Tribune*. In its editorial "Patience and Understanding," the *Herald Tribune* argued that Eisenhower was justified in negotiating with Darlan, who they labeled "the arch-Anglophobe, the collaborator, third in rank among the men of Vichy." By doing so, Eisenhower had been able to free North Africa and, possibly, other Vichy colonies.<sup>206</sup> At

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<sup>205</sup>"The Cloud Over Africa," *The Chicago Sun*, 17 November 1942, 10.

<sup>206</sup>"Patience and Understanding," *The New York Herald Tribune*, 17 November 1942, 30.

the same time, the *Herald* recognized that deals with fascists might undermine the Allied commitment to the war. To redeem itself, the paper seemed to say, the U.S. should formally embrace the Free French. To the paper, de Gaulle and the Free French, who had continued the war against Hitler after the French defeat, represented the struggle to preserve democratic forms. This would reassure all Allies that the U.S. remained dedicated to preserving democracy.

At the same time the De Gaullists deserve at least equal consideration from the American government. They represent more than a policy of unceasing resistance to Hitler—great though the benefits which the United Nations have already derived from that policy may be. They also stand for the best of the old France, the real France, the France of liberty, equality and fraternity to which President Roosevelt appealed as the Americans went into North Africa... While pursuing the immediate military aims of the Allied forces in North Africa, it is essential that the Fighting French in London be kept informed of those aims and the measures being taken to realize them. The ultimate objective of the Allies must be to enlist all patriotic Frenchmen in the war, and that cannot be attained by fostering doubts among those who have never laid down their arms. If patience and understanding are demanded of the Fighting French, they are obviously entitled to receive frankness and cordiality in return.<sup>207</sup>

The *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* was more conspicuous in what it didn't say than it what it did. In its November 17 editorial "What Darlan Means," the *Morning Tribune* did not offer any explanations or reasons to support Eisenhower's

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<sup>207</sup>Ibid.

deal with Darlan. Indeed, the paper had harsh words for Darlan.

Though there isn't any profitable point in accepting him [Darlan] as a flaming convert to the cause of the United Nations. That he is not, and it is doubtful if he ever will be. He is a Frenchman who never will forgive Germany nor Britain, and a European who always will be able to keep his affection for the United States within reasonable bounds.<sup>208</sup>

Instead, the paper's editorial sounds like an attempt to make something good out of a bad situation. Aside from the negatives that Darlan brought with him, the fact that the admiral joined the Allied cause pointed to an even greater victory, one that should have rallied the Allied spirit:

While all this is not particularly flattering, his [Darlan's] accession to our ranks can only mean one thing and that is that he has come to the conclusion that Hitler's star is on the wane and that it is only a matter of time until it will sink below the horizon. This judgment, which is not appreciably affected by any sentimental considerations, is all the more encouraging because it is devoid of wishful thinking.

Darlan, of course, has a decided advantage over Pétain when it comes to any expression of honest views, in that he is without the reach of the Nazis. The aged marshal, who has not displayed any of the Darlan bitterness, might talk in different terms if he were in Africa instead of in the hands of the Hitlerites. The trend of events in Tunis and Algeria suggest this.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>208</sup>"What Darlan Means," *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 17 November 1942, 4.

<sup>209</sup>*Ibid.*

The *San Francisco Chronicle* also gave some measure of support while issuing a warning. In its November 17 editorial "Darlan," the paper stated that issues surrounding Vichy have never been more unclear. Although the public must assume that Eisenhower "has reason for what he is doing with Darlan and the others" the Allies should not trust the assurances of any former Vichy officials. The *Chronicle* cited the French release of \$200 million of Belgian gold to the Germans on November 6, before the North African invasion, as proof of Vichy collaboration with the enemy.<sup>210</sup> If the French Government sought to support Nazi ideals, why should the Americans expect that Vichy officials would now support Allied ideals?

There must be some significance in the reported arrival in Algiers of former Premier Etienne Flandin and former Minister of the Interior Pierre Pucheu, yet this is confusing. Flandin has been amongst the appeasers. Do they think the American horse is the one to back now or are they up to something else?<sup>211</sup>

The *New York Times* seized on the Darlans deal's potential threat to the anti-Nazi alliance in its November 17 editorial "Our French Policy." The *Times* admitted that there were many reasons for the public to be confused. The Free French, who never surrendered to Hitler, had not been

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<sup>210</sup>"Darlan," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 17 November 1942, 18.

<sup>211</sup>*Ibid.*

involved in the North African campaign. Instead, the U.S. had seemingly propped up Darlan "until a week ago the colleague of Laval." This gave the appearance of legitimizing fascism by negotiating with its agents instead of supporting the French group primarily opposed to its existence. This, the paper said, seems a rebirth of appeasement.<sup>212</sup>

After raising these issues, the *Times* tells its readers to refrain from judgment, much as the *Christian Science Monitor* did on November 16. The *Times* expressed faith that the U.S. government would soon solve the moral dilemmas imposed by the Darlan Deal. No agreement with fascists could overshadow the Allies' commitment to defeat the Axis.

Whatever obscurities or apparent contradictions there may be in the present American political policy in North Africa, we do not for a moment believe that the course our Government is following means that we have mistaken our enemies for friends, or lost interest in the real cause for which our friends are fighting—namely, the life of the French Republic. We urge patience, and confidence, on the part of both the Americans and of their French colleagues in arms. The French Republic never had a better friend than the President who directs our policy in this crisis.<sup>213</sup>

More anti-Darlan press appeared on November 18. The *St. Louis Dispatch*, for instance, attacked Darlan directly in

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<sup>212</sup>"Our French Policy," *The New York Times*, 17 November 1942, 24.

<sup>213</sup>*Ibid.*

"Darlan's Latest Flip-Flop." The paper warned readers of Darlan's unreliability and encouraged the military to keep a close watch on the admiral. That the *Dispatch* disapproved of the deal there can be little doubt. The paper branded Darlan as a Nazi collaborationist who displayed loose convictions, a particularly noteworthy attack in a war fought largely on conviction.

Only a few weeks ago, Admiral Jean Darlan was among the strongest advocates of French collaboration with Nazi Germany, and an avowedly bitter enemy of the British. Now he is co-operating with the American occupying forces in North Africa, has set himself up as civil administrator there and has called on the French fleet to join the Allies.

So the former chief of all Vichy's armed forces has completed another flip-flop by again going over to the seemingly winning side. He had double-crossed his own country by siding with its conquerors; now he turns around and double-crosses the Nazis. The slippery Darlan is burning no bridges behind him, however. He avows his continued loyalty to Pétain, but says the Marshal's orders must be disregarded "because he is unable to let the French people know his real thoughts...."

Now that this treacherous opportunist has swung over to the Allied side, in an effort to save his own skin, he may be of help in keeping the fleet out of Nazi clutches. Undoubtedly; however, the Allied commanders are watching him closely while making use of his services. Darlan's slimy record shows that he is capable of betraying his new found friends if events seem to be going against them.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>214</sup>"Darlan's Latest Flip-Flop," *The St. Louis Dispatch*, 18 November 1942, 2B.

On November 19, a letter to the editor titled "Darlan and the Atlantic Charter," appeared in the *Minneapolis Star Journal*. The writer, Frank Adams, questioned the morality of the Darlan Deal. He wanted to know how General Eisenhower explained the principles of the Atlantic Charter to Darlan and how, in turn, Darlan had the moral authority to explain them to the French people. To the writer, Darlan was as abhorrent as Vidkun Quisling. Quisling, a former Norwegian minister of war and Nazi sympathizer, had provided secret military information to the Nazis which assisted the German invasion of Norway.<sup>215</sup>

If appointing Darlan to the head of the French North African government will help win the war, I am for it, but it will take a lot of proving to make me see it. Anyway, I don't think we are fighting to restore Quislings in government positions.<sup>216</sup>

A column titled "Darlan Forte In Africa Is Still Obscure" appeared in the November 19 issue of the *Oregonian*. The columnist, Dorothy Thompson, refused to believe the United States would set up a Vichy government in North Africa. If American policy was to promote Roosevelt's Four Freedoms throughout the world, then all fascist regimes must be destroyed. Darlan's career was built on tearing down the

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<sup>215</sup>Weinberg, *A World At Arms*, 114.

<sup>216</sup>Frank Adams, "Darlan and the Atlantic Charter," *The Minneapolis Star Journal*, 29 November 1942, 14.



principles embodied in the Four Freedoms, not building them up. To support Darlan would be to ignore the moral underpinnings of the Four Freedoms.

Vichy France, under the prominent leadership of Admiral Darlan, was a pallid beige naziism. It abolished the motto of "liberty, equality and fraternity"; it destroyed every vestige of popular government;... it participated in the deportation of Jews to Poland; it dissolved trade unions and suppressed the free press... it produced armaments for the German war effort... and caused the deaths of an unknown number of Frenchmen and Americans.

Neither freedom of speech, nor freedom from fear is possible under Vichy leaders. Therefore one must regard the present political situation as an interval in an unconsolidated military situation.<sup>217</sup>

#### Press Reaction in the United Kingdom

Perhaps the deepest criticism of the Darlan Deal materialized in the United Kingdom. The deal seemed to repudiate the meaning of the struggle the British people had been engaged in for over three long years, even more so for a nation that had recognized de Gaulle and the Free French. Darlan represented the epitome of the French defeatism that had left Britain alone to fight against Hitler.

The *London Times* addressed these issues in its November 17 editorial "The Destiny of France." Since the June 1940 French defeat, the paper said, France had fallen into

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<sup>217</sup>Dorothy Thompson, "Darlan Forte in Africa is Still Obscure," *The Oregonian*, 19 November 1942, 10.

"physical and moral prostration." Marshal Pétain had become a symbol of this hopelessness and passivity. "He has offered nothing more than passive resistance, at best, to the active collaboration with Germany pressed upon France by... Laval and others." Pétain had also resisted all efforts to aid the Allied cause. This Vichy policy, "with the undisguised approval of Berlin, has been undermining the republican traditions of 1789 and after."<sup>218</sup>

Because these policies had split French society, it had become impossible for the Allies to appoint French groups to administer freed French territory. Such a transfer of authority could only happen if there were "an overwhelming consensus of opinion among Frenchmen... on the representative character of the individual or group concerned." In November 1942, that consensus was impossible at the time. For this reason, the Western Allies had to administer French colonies and territories in trust for the French people.

The *Times* argued that these were the moral obligations that the Allies owed the French. Only the people of a liberated France, with its institutions of free expression and democracy restored, could legitimately decide the fate of France. The Darlan Deal made the restatement of these imperatives all the more important. Significantly, the

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<sup>218</sup>"The Destiny of France," *The Times* (London), 17 November 1942, 5.

*Times* contrasted Darlan's experience with that of Giraud, who never accepted a Vichy position.

Admiral Darlan's services in the restoration of order and confidence have been accepted by the allied command. His record since 1940 makes the choice, to say the least of it, unexpected. But for the moment his cooperation with General Giraud (whose unimpeachable record is the subject on this page this morning) and with General Noguès is assured.<sup>219</sup>

French unity was not needed immediately, the paper said. What was needed was unified and effective action to defeat the Axis. Once this happened, the French people could choose their own system of government.

The stating of this position was clear. The *Times* claimed that self-determination and liberation must always be the Allied goal for France. These were the basic principles the Allies were fighting for. Under no circumstances would the *Times* condone the recognition of a neo-Vichy government headed by Darlan or any other fascist. To recognize any government other than that chosen by the French people would be counter to the Atlantic Charter's position of restoring democracy to enslaved peoples.

The *Manchester Guardian*, in its November 18 editorial, "The Darlan Mystery," also argued that the Darlan Deal should not prepare the way for a post-war fascist government in France. The *Guardian* asked its readers to consider

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<sup>219</sup>Ibid.

Darlan's reasons for switching from the Axis to the Allied camp. The paper saw one of two possibilities: That Marshal Pétain had sent Darlan to North Africa to establish a pro-Vichy government in the Allied camp, or Darlan could have come of his own accord, angered by his loss of status at Vichy. In either case, a dangerous Vichyite system, in control of an African empire, survived the war.<sup>220</sup>

If a Fascist or semi-Fascist party is built up now in Northern Africa France may be precipitated at the peace into a civil war. Just as Pétain and Weygand argued for surrender to Germany in June, 1940, on the ground that if the war went on there would be a Communist revolution, so again Frenchman who want France to restore democracy and take her place on the side of the Atlantic Charter may be warned that nothing but the rule of this Fascist party and the preservation of the Vichy revolution can save France from anarchy... If that plot is organized by the men who betrayed France the bitterness of the struggle that will follow will be implacable.<sup>221</sup>

The same day, a letter to the editor appeared in the *London Times* that hinted how deeply the democratic principal behind the war ran in the public. The author, D. Saurat, argued that the Western Allies must assume responsibility for the liberated French territories. Delegating responsibility to the various French groups ran great risks.

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<sup>220</sup>"The Darlan Mystery," *The Manchester Guardian*, 18 November 1942, 4.

<sup>221</sup>*Ibid.*

Two great dangers are looming ahead: the potentiality of civil war among the French, the disappearance of the democratic principal for the French... In de Gaulle's committee, it has not been found possible to make use of any democratic principal: the *commissaires nationaux* are responsible only to de Gaulle. Darlan, on the other side, founds his powers on le Maréchal, and therefore is not likely to re-establish democracy.<sup>222</sup>

To preserve democratic forms, the author recommended calling an assembly of exiled representative Frenchmen, as General de Gaulle had advocated. The body would be composed of members of the French Parliament currently living in Allied territories as well as distinguished French writers, diplomats, and administrators of high rank living outside occupied France. Although the body would have no real power, since it wouldn't truly represent France, it would preserve French democratic forms.

So far we have only generals and admirals speaking for France. Should they not be the servants of the State and not its masters? The leaders of the United Nations are great democrats, they are negotiating with the generals and admirals. But in your own words they are responsible to the people of France.<sup>223</sup>

Criticism of the Darlan Deal also appeared in Parliament. On November 11, King George VI praised the landings in North Africa as "notable steps towards final victory," in his

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<sup>222</sup>D. Saurat, "French Democracy," *The Times* (London), 18 November 1942, 5.

<sup>223</sup>*Ibid.*

annual address to Parliament, written by Churchill's coalition government.<sup>224</sup> Members of the House of Commons used the King's reference in order to denounce the Darlan Deal. The Darlan issues was raised eight times while the House debated the King's Speech.

On November 12, even before the Darlan Deal had been announced, one Member of Parliament, Aneurin Bevan, told the Commons that the Allies should never negotiate with Admiral Darlan. "Admiral Darlan is a bad man; he is a bad man from whatever point of view you like to regard him."<sup>225</sup> He recognized that such negotiations might carry some advantages, such as saving lives, but the Allies should not sacrifice their principles for immediate gains. Instead, full support should be given to de Gaulle.

He is no longer a man; he is a symbol. Therefore, I say do not try to put these traitorous quislings, these rats now leaving the sinking ship, in place of men who stood staunchly by our side in our most difficult days.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup>*Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 5th ser., vol. 386 (1942) cols. 6-7.

<sup>225</sup>*Ibid.*, cols. 136-137.

<sup>226</sup>*Ibid.*, col. 136.

CHAPTER V  
ROOSEVELT'S STATEMENT

The White House rushed to respond to press criticism, but not always with Eisenhower's best interests in mind. The State Department urged Roosevelt to order Eisenhower not to retain any former Vichy officials "to whom well founded objections might be taken." Admiral William D. Leahy, the former American ambassador to Vichy and then Roosevelt's chief of staff, stopped the order. Leahy told Roosevelt that Eisenhower needed a degree of freedom in order to accomplish the U.S.' objectives.<sup>227</sup>

Secretary of War Harry Stimson demanded more freedom and support be given to Eisenhower. He told Roosevelt that the American people needed to hear a defense of Eisenhower by the president before criticism of the Darlan Deal would subside. Roosevelt was reluctant to make this defense; his policy of continued relations with Vichy had been widely criticized but the President had never defended it. But now all of the President's major advisors felt a statement was necessary.<sup>228</sup>

Unless Roosevelt said the Darlan Deal did not represent a sacrifice of American war principles, criticism might

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<sup>227</sup>Ambrose, 130-131.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid., 131.

continue to build. Possibly, the public might become disillusioned and support for the war would weaken.

A message Roosevelt received from Churchill on November 17 may have helped convince the President that he needed to support Eisenhower publically. In it, the Prime Minister took the position argued by many of the American and British newspapers: the Darlan Deal undermined the Allies' position as the defenders of democracy.

I ought to let you know that very deep currents of feeling are stirred by the arrangement with Darlan. The more I reflect upon it the more convinced I become that it can only be a temporary expedient justifiable solely by the stress of battle. We must not overlook the serious political injury which may be done to our cause, not only in France but throughout Europe, by the feeling that we are ready to make terms with the local quislings. Darlan has an odious record. It is he who has incalculated in the French Navy its malignant disposition by promoting his creatures to command. It is but yesterday that French sailors were sent to their death against your line off Casablanca and now, for the sake of power and office, Darlan plays the turncoat. A permanent arrangement with Darlan or the formation of a Darlan government in French North Africa would not be understood by the great masses of ordinary people whose simple loyalties are our strength.<sup>229</sup>

The Prime Minister's comments were reinforced by a message sent on the same day from the British Foreign Office to its embassy in Washington. The message spelled out the official British position that although the Allies might have to deal with Darlan for military expediency, his role

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<sup>229</sup>Feis, 7.



in the Vichy government made any long-term acceptance untenable: "There is above all our own moral position... We are fighting for international decency and Darlan is the antithesis of this."<sup>230</sup>

At any rate Roosevelt agreed that some sort of statement was called for. The President asked Milton Eisenhower, an Office of War Information official and General Eisenhower's younger brother, for a draft statement. Roosevelt made significant changes to the statement, adding the word "temporary" in a number of places. The President delivered the statement at a press conference on November 17.<sup>231</sup>

I have accepted General Eisenhower's political arrangements made for the time being in Northern and Western Africa.

I thoroughly understand and approve the feeling in the United States and Great Britain and among all the other United Nations that in view of the history of the past two years no permanent arrangement should be made with Admiral Darlan. People in the United Nations likewise would never understand the recognition of a reconstituting of the Vichy Government in France or in any French territory.

We are opposed to Frenchmen who support Hitler and the Axis. No one in our Army has any authority to discuss the future Government of France and the French Empire.

The future French Government will be established, not by any individual in Metropolitan France or overseas, but by the French people themselves

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<sup>230</sup>Ambrose, 130.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid., 131.

after they have been set free by the stress of battle....

The present temporary arrangement has accomplished two military objectives. The first was to save American and British lives, and French lives on the other hand.

The second was the vital factor of time. The temporary arrangement has made it possible to avoid a "mopping up" period in Algiers and Morocco which might have taken a month to two to consummate. Such a period would have delayed the concentration for the attack from the West on Tunis, and we hope on Tripoli....

Admiral Darlan's proclamation assisted in making a "mopping up" period unnecessary. Temporary arrangements made with Admiral Darlan apply, without exception, to the current local situation only.

I have requested the liberation of all persons in Northern Africa who had been imprisoned because they opposed the efforts of the Nazis to dominate the world, and I have asked for the abrogation of all laws and decrees inspired by Nazi Governments or Nazi ideologist. Reports indicate that the French of North Africa are subordinating all political questions to the formation of a common front against the common enemy.<sup>232</sup>

By making the statement, Roosevelt argued that dealing with fascists for military expediency did not weaken the commitment of the Allies to restoring individual freedoms. The president used the Darlan issue as an example to reassure the public that making use of collaborators to achieve military aims in exchange for reconstituting fascist

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<sup>232</sup> "Temporary Political Arrangement in North and West Africa: Statement by the President," *The Department of State Bulletin* VII (21 November 1942): 935.

regimes after the war would be a violation of the trust the people placed in their leaders.

The President's statement seemed to have a calming effect on the media. Many newspapers now argued that Roosevelt's statement confirmed that the Allies were still dedicated to the principles for which the war was being fought. They also voiced optimism that the French admiral would be eventually removed from his position in North Africa.

In effect, Roosevelt's statement redirected the focus of public's anger. With the moral justification of the war reaffirmed and the Darlan Deal justified as a life saving measure, the press no longer had any reason to directly attack the bargain. In a sense, Roosevelt had given it a moral justification of its own, saving lives.

This shift in the editorial stance of the American newspapers can clearly be seen in a sampling of 17 major American newspapers between November 19 and November 22. Before Roosevelt's statement, the majority of opinion pieces that discussed the Darlan Deal opposed it. But after the President's statement this changed; of 23 syndicated columns, editorials or letters to the editor, 19 now portrayed the Darlan Deal favorably.

But the concept of negotiating with collaborators and fascists continued to be unpopular. The press continued to voice displeasure by portraying Admiral Darlan as extremely

untrustworthy because of his association with French Vichy Government and its collaboration with Nazi Germany.

Evidence of the public's continued refusal to accept Darlan can also be found in the November 19 to November 22 sampling of 17 American newspapers. While the majority of editorials and letters to the editor were now offering support for the Darlan Deal, the number of negative portrayals of Admiral Darlan only increased. In 22 syndicated columns, editorials or letters to the editor that expressed opinions about Admiral Darlan, not one offered a favorable evaluation.

The press also praised the public for questioning the ethics of the Darlan Deal. The public concern, as reflected in the press, indicated that the citizens of the Allied nations opposed Fascism of any type. The press argued that the Darlan incident proved the public understood that liberal western beliefs were under attack by Nazism and only a complete defeat of fascist forces could preserve democratic way of life.

The *New York Post* recognized the force of public opinion in its November 18 editorial "The President Speaks." The paper praised Roosevelt for giving "consummate proof that the questions which trouble all decent democrats are uppermost in his own mind."<sup>233</sup> The *Post* noted that the

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<sup>233</sup>"The President Speaks," *The New York Post*, 18 November 1942, 31.

President referred to the deal as a temporary military arrangement justified because it saved lives. The *Post* congratulated the American public, too. The paper claimed the outcry over Darlan proved that public sentiment wanted a complete destruction of fascist and Nazi ideas.

The pressure by decent, democratic opinion against Darlan strengthened the President, made it inevitable that he would break the ice, led us straight toward this grand moment of clarification.

Had the American part of the world kept quiet, our allies everywhere might still be dazed, baffled and bewildered. The pressure of opinion made a solution necessary, and it was forthcoming....

...For the benefit of timid officials everywhere:  
DOWN WITH DARLAN, as we said on Monday.<sup>234</sup>

The *Christian Science Monitor*, offered tentative support for the Darlan arrangement in its November 18 editorial titled "Deals with Darlans." As justification for the Darlan Deal, the paper noted Roosevelt's explanation that the military situation demanded the Allies reach some understanding with Darlan. The Allied efforts to secure a quick surrender were hampered since the Allied choice for the French leadership, General Giraud, was viewed as a traitor by the French in North Africa, and since Darlan had helped install the North African administration. The need to negotiate and meet Darlan's demands proved greater than

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<sup>234</sup>Ibid.

the risk of using the American military to prop up a fascist regime.<sup>235</sup> However, the paper warned its readers not to trust Darlan. The admiral may have a hidden purpose behind his switch to the Allied camp.

More than a doubt remains, of course, as to how much authority can be entrusted to Darlan. Two can always play at a game which one may imagine oneself to the playing alone. There are risks involved in deals with Darlan

So far the risks would appear to be worth the taking. Doubtless they have saved both American and French lives. And the time they have saved may prove crucial. But even more will have to be known before anxieties are quite set at rest. For example, what was Darlan's price? Or has the ruthlessness of France's conqueror, and the turn of battle's tide, at last confounded the confusion that was Vichy?<sup>236</sup>

On November 18, the *Louisville Courier Journal* published a long editorial, titled "Our Deal With Darlan Was a Military Coup," supporting Eisenhower. The paper praised Eisenhower not for negotiating with Darlan, who remained a Vichy collaborator, but for taking advantage of the situation.

The *Courier Journal* bemoaned the divisiveness the Darlan Deal created among the Allies. As proof of the disenchantment of the allied powers, the paper wrote that the Fighting French were "openly bitter" and the British

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<sup>235</sup>"Deals with Darlans," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 18 November 1942, 24.

<sup>236</sup>*Ibid.*

House of Commons wanted an explanation of the "most mysterious chapter of this war and of all countries."<sup>237</sup> But the paper claims this outrage was uncalled for; Roosevelt's explanation that the Darlan Deal was temporary and only reached for military reasons was the only explanation needed.

Darlan had much to offer the Allies, the *Courier Journal* told its readers. As Vichy's Defense Minister, the Admiral could strongly influence other French generals in North Africa. Not only could he bring the French army over to the Allied camp, but he might persuade the French fleet as well. "Of course, the transaction was not ideal," the paper said, in order to acknowledge that Darlan was an undesirable character. "But wars are not waged according to Hoyle and any advantage over the enemy is seized."<sup>238</sup>

The *Courier Journal* claimed to understand the concerns of the Fighting French. The group feared being overshadowed by an American-supported fascist government. Eisenhower did not plan to let that happen, the paper told its readers. Darlan had helped save lives and material, none of which could be spared, but once his usefulness expired, he would be thrown away. The Eisenhower-Darlan Deal "is like our policy of playing along with Vichy although he recognized it

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<sup>237</sup>"Our Deal with Darlan was a Military Coup," *The Louisville Courier Journal*, 18 November 1942, 6.

<sup>238</sup>*Ibid.*

was a puppet of Hitler. In war you take help wherever you can get it."<sup>239</sup>

The divisive repercussions to the Darlan affair are unfortunate in creating a spirit of disunity in the anti-Axis camp. But the facts should settle the hullabaloo and the facts seem to be that Eisenhower acted brilliantly and effectively for the best interests of the United Nations.<sup>240</sup>

On November 19, the *New York Post* put forward an editorial that gave an in-depth analysis of Roosevelt's statement. In doing so, the paper had abandoned its opposition and now fully supported the Darlan policy.

Those of us who have been deeply disturbed over General Eisenhower's collaboration with Darlan—and we are millions all over the earth—can accept President Roosevelt's statement on the subject gratefully and in good faith.

In content and in timing it was a superb accomplishment of statesmanship. It is an explanation of a specific occurrence and an affirmation of principles for our future guidance. It ranks with and supplements the Atlantic Charter.<sup>241</sup>

Although the paper sounded words of support, it didn't back off from its position that Darlan could not be trusted. As proof of the *Post*'s opposition to Darlan, the paper asked questions designed to highlight the French admiral's

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<sup>239</sup>Ibid.

<sup>240</sup>Ibid.

<sup>241</sup>"Darlan's Future," *The New York Post*, 19 November 1942, 27.



untrustworthiness. These questions included: Who is to determine when Darlan should step down? What have the Allies done to prevent Darlan from gaining too much political power? Could Darlan still be in power when the offensive in Europe begins? Could Darlan switch sides yet again?<sup>242</sup>

The paper stated that answers to those questions needed to come quickly in order to convince:

the common man of enslaved Europe... that if and when we deal with their Darlans or Quislings that we... use them for whatever they can contribute in information, or as decoys, but never as allies.<sup>243</sup>

In closing, the *Post* praised the public for questioning the North African arrangement, as it did in the previous day's editorial. To the paper, the public response indicated its deep opposition to fascist and totalitarian regimes:

Frankly, we're delighted that so many people, here and in England, have shouted their questions ever since the first word of dealings with Darlan came out. Consider what it would signify if people didn't care enough to question transactions with a double action Quisling.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>242</sup>Ibid.

<sup>243</sup>Ibid.

<sup>244</sup>Ibid.

On the same day, November 19, commentator Johannes Steel also discussed the Darlan issue in the *New York Post*. In his "Steel Filings" column, the writer claimed that even though the President had promised that no permanent arrangement with Darlan had been made, a dangerous precedent had been established that damaged America's moral authority. Steel asked readers to consider what the people of Norway would say if the Allies temporarily appointed Quisling to a leadership position.

Steel argued that the arrangement with Darlan, even as a temporary measure, had a profoundly negative psychological impact. Allied governments-in-exile must now ask themselves if the Americans would support local Quislings instead of the legitimate authorities once their nations were liberated.<sup>245</sup>

It is incontestable that our moral and political prestige in enslaved Europe has declined in direct proportion to the tremendous increase in our military prestige. We have committed one the worst blunders of the war.<sup>246</sup>

Because of the ethical questions the Darlan Deal raised, Steel continued, the "temporary and limited military

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<sup>245</sup>Johannes Steel, "Steel Filings: Suppose We Made Quisling the Ruler of Norway?" *The New York Post*, 19 November 1942. 27.

<sup>246</sup>*Ibid.*

advantages" achieved through negotiations with Darlan might not "outweigh the political disadvantages."<sup>247</sup>

The *Washington Post* proposed to its November 19 readers that the Americans were in a better position to eliminate remnants of Vichy with Darlan than they would have been without him. In the editorial "Clearing The Air," the *Post* stated that Roosevelt supported Eisenhower's agreement with Darlan because it allowed us "to clinch our military hold on French North Africa."<sup>248</sup> Having accomplished that, the Darlan agreement put America in a position to demand the abolition of Nazi-influenced laws and demand the release of political prisoners. "Accordingly, far from constituting, as some have argued, an 'appeasement' policy, the efforts taken by General Eisenhower, in the light of his information, partook of military statesmanship of the most realistic and fruitful kind."<sup>249</sup>

The columnist Samuel Grafton, in his November 19 "I'd Rather Be Right" column, argued that Roosevelt's statement on Darlan established two important precedents, the first being that fascists of any stripe eventually would be rejected by the Allies.<sup>250</sup> The second precedent that

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<sup>247</sup>Ibid.

<sup>248</sup>"Clearing the Air," *The Washington Post*, 19 November 1942, 12.

<sup>249</sup>Ibid.

<sup>250</sup>Samuel Grafton, "I'd Rather Be Right," *The New York Post*, 19 November 1942, 26.

Roosevelt established, according to Grafton, was that any person who supported even a few fascist ideals would be considered a die-hard opponent of the Four Freedoms.

You have to remember that there are German Darlans, and Italian Darlans, and Czech Darlans, and Norwegian Darlans. The Darlan case is rich in its power to set precedents; it is bursting with precedents; Darlan's flight is a trial flight for fascists all over Europe.<sup>251</sup>

The statement broke with the long-standing diplomatic reasoning that the U.S. dealt with a government, even a fascist government, simply because it had authority. However, the president promised to remove Darlan from his position once his usefulness had ended. This meant that the Allies would no longer recognize fascist authority. Authority was granted to individuals through democratic elections.<sup>252</sup>

In its November 19 editorial, "A Faith Reaffirmed," the *Chicago Sun* told readers that Roosevelt's statement was significant because it rejected any long term agreements with fascists. In accepting Darlan purely on military terms and rejecting any long-term political arrangements, the paper said Roosevelt reaffirmed the American faith in liberty and democracy. The Darlan affair also illustrated the public's recognition that America's opponents, with whom

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<sup>251</sup>Ibid.

<sup>252</sup>Ibid.

Darlan collaborated, opposed all that American society considered good.

As a front-line soldier in the battle for democracy, Mr. Roosevelt has done what his record suggested he would do. That he acts with the full backing of an aroused public opinion is even more significant. In their distrust of Darlan and their demands for an explanation, the people have given good evidence that they fully understand the difference between a narrow military war and the kind of war in which we are actually engaged. They knew Darlan was out of place because they knew we are fighting not only against certain nations but against the evil forces of Fascism, which are not confined within national boundaries. In such a war the collaborators with Fascism belong on the Axis side of the lines, not ours.<sup>253</sup>

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, which had previously attacked Darlan's character in no uncertain terms, also welcomed Roosevelt's statement in "Darlan's Status Is Cleared Up" on November 19. The *Dispatch* claimed that Roosevelt and Eisenhower knew Darlan's record well.

If the Allied leaders had ignored the opportunity to secure a surrender through Darlan, the North African campaign would have been longer and more costly. "The fact that Eisenhower accepted this help certainly did not mean that he was setting up a Vichy regime, American model, in

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<sup>253</sup>"A Faith Reaffirmed," *The Chicago Sun*, 19 November 1942, 10.

North Africa, or that he was attempting to dictate the future of France," the *Dispatch* assured readers.<sup>254</sup>

After arguing this point, the paper made an astounding flip-flop of its own. As proof of his "slimy" character, the paper had noted on Nov. 18 that Darlan had not abandoned his fascist loyalties after switching sides.<sup>255</sup> Now, the *Dispatch* tried to make apologies for Darlan's fascist tendencies:

An immediate gain from Mr. Roosevelt's statement is in quieting the uneasiness of General de Gaulle's followers. However, acceptance of Darlan's aid merely follows a principle laid down some time ago by the Fighting French movement itself. On Sept. 21, it was announced from London that Charles Vallin, former vice-president of the pro-Fascist movement known as Crois de Feu and an ex-supporter of Pétain, had been received into the De Gaulle organization. This meant, William Stoneman wrote, that "anybody, no matter what his party or his political past, will be welcomed to the ranks of the Fighting French provided only that he is determined to fight the Germans...." Vallin's action will make a deep impression upon many other former collaborators whose loyalty has been shaken by recent events.

It was apparently the same line of reasoning that led to the acceptance of co-operation from Admiral Darlan for its immediate value in the North African war.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup>"Darlan's Status is Cleared Up," *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 19 November 1942, 2B.

<sup>255</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup>*Ibid.*

In its Nov. 19 editorial titled "A 'Temporary Expedient,'" the *New York Herald Tribune* claimed Roosevelt's explanation of the Darlan situation as temporary was exactly what the public needed to hear. In praising the president's explanation, the paper equated Darlan with the Norwegian Vidkun Quisling who aided the German invasion of his homeland. "The idea that we were trafficking with a Quisling for any reasons other than military necessity seems to us completely ended by this forthright utterance," the *Herald Tribune* said. The paper felt the reassurance that the French people were ultimately responsible for the future French Government would soothe a public upset over an American government embracing French fascists but remaining cool toward General de Gaulle. "The President is to be congratulated on making this plain, as well as upon making plain at the same time that no fundamental principles have been compromised," the paper argued.<sup>257</sup> The paper did not save its biggest congratulations for the president, however. Another group claimed that prize:

It seems to us that congratulations are also owing to the Fighting French representatives who have so promptly understood and generously accepted the situation. In this they were only reflecting the attitude of General de Gaulle himself, who from the moment of the landing has spoken only as a French soldier and a French patriot in the noblest sense. It is an example which will shine only the

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<sup>257</sup> "A 'Temporary Expedient'," *The New York Herald Tribune*, 19 November 1942, 26.

brighter through the months against the more  
devious obscurities bequeathed to us by the  
corruptions of Vichy.<sup>258</sup>

The *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* endorsed the Eisenhower-Darlan Deal in "Temporary Expedient" on November 19 but it stopped short of endorsing Darlan. The Pioneer Press claimed that President Roosevelt's statement on the affair "goes a long way to clear up a muddy, bad-tasting and incipiently dangerous situation." Since the Darlan Deal advanced the timetable of American forces in North Africa perhaps two or three months, it helped prevent the Axis from launching an organized counter-offensive. This alone justified the deal. The president's refusal to support any proposed government advanced by Darlan reinforced the importance of the issues for which the war was fought.

This statement places Darlan where he belongs: A Vichyard who jumped to Africa to save his own skin when he saw the handwriting on the wall. It reveals that he has been used to assist the military occupation and will be discarded at the end of his usefulness instead of being allowed to step back into power on the shoulders of the United Nations.<sup>259</sup>

The *Atlanta Constitution* threw its weight in favor of the Darlan Deal in an editorial titled "Forehanded Realism" on Nov. 20. This newspaper presents a typical editorial for

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<sup>258</sup>Ibid.

<sup>259</sup>"Temporary Expedient," *The Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, 19 November 1942, 8.



the period following Roosevelt's statement of support for the Eisenhower-Darlan pact. But Darlan himself was an unscrupulous individual who could not long be tolerated. The paper reports that the United States was dealing with a man of the lowest moral order. By extension, Darlan represented the opposite of the ideals for which the Allies were fighting.

Darlan is a victim of two emotions. One is his overweening ambition and the other his jealous hatred of the British. As a French naval officer he has always been jealous of British naval supremacy and he has allowed that factor to taint his entire character and outlook. Add to this his compelling ambition for personal power and the man's character begins to be understandable.<sup>260</sup>

*Chicago Sun* writer Frank Smothers in a November 20 column titled "Mr. Roosevelt's Opportunity" claimed the president's statement on Darlan helped combat a growing cynicism toward the U.S. in the world community. This cynicism was brought about because of failures, like the Darlan incident, to prove America's belief in the principles of the Atlantic Charter. When the Atlantic Charter was issued, people in Asia, Europe, and America welcomed the pledge to respect the right of people to choose their own form of government, Smothers said. Roosevelt's statement helped reassure other nations that the Atlantic Charter still formed the country's

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<sup>260</sup>"Forehanded Realism," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 20 November 1942, 8.

basic policy. That being so, Smothers challenged the president to continue to uphold the principles of the Atlantic Charter.<sup>261</sup>

Having spent most of the last decade in China and Europe I have learned that no statesman approached Mr. Roosevelt in the general world confidence he enjoys as a leader of democracy.... He can do more for a free Italy, free Spain, free Europe, free India, free society of nations... But he can succeed only if he has the audacity to match his principles; and only if he acts as the agent of a people dedicated to freedom.<sup>262</sup>

The *Des Moines Register* argued that the Darlan policy did not represent appeasement in "Reassurance About Darlan" on November 20. Negotiating with "turncoat ex-collaborationists" did not mean that any principle had been sacrificed. Indeed, the United States would not "coldly ditch all our natural allies."<sup>263</sup> In other words, Darlan's switch to the Allied camp was not caused by ideological motivations. His ideas did not fit with those of the Allies and because of that, he would never be allowed to have a formative role among the Allies.

No person should look at the Darlan Deal as a political arrangement, only a military one, the paper said. To

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<sup>261</sup>Frank Smothers, "As Sun Writers See It: Mr. Roosevelt's Opportunity," *The Chicago Sun*, 20 November 1942, 10.

<sup>262</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup>"Reassurance About Darlan," *The Des Moines Register*, 20 November 1942, 10.

support this position, the *Register* claimed the Darlan Deal didn't substantially change any of General Eisenhower's plans. American policy had been to place General Giraud in charge of the French North African military forces, the exact position Giraud received under Darlan. All Eisenhower did was use Darlan to improve the Allied military ends.<sup>264</sup>

Dorothy Thompson's November 20 "On the Record" column took issue with Roosevelt's statement because it implied American administration of the French North African colonies. It would be wrong, she wrote, for the president to restore the French republican constitution by demanding the repeal of the Nazi inspired laws and the release of Free French prisoners. The only legitimate method of restoring the French Constitution is to restore it in principle.<sup>265</sup>

Suppose that the whole U.S. were occupied by Nazis and Japanese. Suppose that these had found local Quislings and Laval, who had abolished the Constitution and taken over the Administration and were ruling--and as Laval now is in all of France but Algeria--by decrees, resting on Nazi-Jap bayonets. Now suppose that an Anglo-American expeditionary force had landed in Maine, taken over the government, and established themselves. What would they do politically? What call would they send out to the people of America? Would they arbitrarily pick an administrator, or would

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<sup>264</sup>Ibid.

<sup>265</sup>Dorothy Thompson, "On the Record: The Need of a United Nations Policy," *The New York Post*, 20 November 1942, 31.

they then re-establish the American Constitution?.... The analogy is exact.<sup>266</sup>

The *Chicago Daily Tribune* argued the same position as the *Des Moines Register*—that Eisenhower did not abandon American ideals by signing an agreement with Darlan, albeit more forcibly. In its November 21 editorial, "The Darlan Mystery," the *Daily Tribune* attacked the "bleeding hearts" who thought the Darlan Deal would "alienate friendship for us in France..."<sup>267</sup> The paper argued that this assumption is entirely wrong. The French knew the Germans and Italians coveted French colonies, colonies the Americans would just as soon leave alone. The French know that Hitler planned to dominate France politically and economically and that America fought in support of self-determination. Lastly, the paper argued, the Fighting French knew that they could never liberate France without American help. These factors should put to rest any fears of alienating the Free French or of splitting the Allied cause by negotiating with Darlan, even though he may be "the embodiment of wickedness."<sup>268</sup>

Here is evidence that even one of the most adamant supporters of Eisenhower recognized that Darlan did not represent democratic virtues. To the *Daily Tribune*, any

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<sup>266</sup>Ibid.

<sup>267</sup>"The Darlan Mystery," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 November 1942, 14.

<sup>268</sup>Ibid.

stigma that may arise from treating with the enemy, in this instance, was outweighed by a higher moral position.

If General Eisenhower had not taken advantage of the opportunity presented to him he would have been grossly derelict in his duty to his men and a lot of American mothers and fathers today would be mourning the loss of their sons."<sup>269</sup>

A letter to the *Chicago Sun* on November 21 praised the newspaper for its stand against Darlan. The writer, who only identified himself as "Simple Simon," claimed that by supporting "slimy opportunists and turncoats like Darlan," the United States had turned its back on De Gaulle and Free French, the only French group to continue the fight against Hitler. "Now they are being superseded by eleventh-hour converts who are more interested in getting on the winning side than in serving their country. *La bas Darlan. Vive De Gaulle.*"<sup>270</sup>

In his November 21 "Steel Filings" column, Johannes Steel warned that it now appeared that many fascists had been trying to contact Allied authorities since the Darlan incident. To support this claim he pointed to an Associated Press report from London claiming that German generals were sending out feelers concerning a strong, de-Nazified Germany as a bulwark against the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the *New*

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<sup>269</sup>Ibid.

<sup>270</sup>Simple Simon, "Darlan Deal Distrusted," *The Chicago Sun*, 21 November 1942, 8.

*York Times* reported an unidentified Washington source as saying that "If Goering should offer to come over with a few planes, we don't want him. He will cost more than he will contribute. But if he can bring the Luftwaffe with him we'll receive him." Steel wanted to know if this was an invitation.<sup>271</sup>

Steel argues that these events and quotes provide evidence that Axis leaders now wondered about the Allies' moral fortitude. If a deal can be struck with Darlan, why not Hitler's own military forces? The only way to combat this is to publicly refuse any peace with the German General Staff;<sup>272</sup> to again state the Allied commitment to the absolute destruction of Naziism and its origins.

In fact, the German General Staff is even more dangerous than Hitler since it is not always recognized that Pan-German imperialism and Prussian militarism were precisely the anti-democratic seeds that germinated into the weed of National Socialism.<sup>273</sup>

Samuel Grafton, in his "I'd Rather Be Right" column of November 21, also warned that the Allies had begun receiving contacts from fascists. Grafton pointed out that many of these people were Vichyites fleeing France to join up with

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<sup>271</sup>Johannes Steel, "Steel Filings: No Peace with Men Responsible for Hitler," *The New York Post*, 21 November 1942, 19.

<sup>272</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup>*Ibid.*

Darlan in Africa, but Grafton was more worried about what to do with fascists once the Allies had them, than what to do about negotiating with them.<sup>274</sup>

We've talked about setting up a commission to try fascists, after the war, but our idea is to try them for derivative, or secondary crimes, not for the big crime of fascism. If M. Laval has never committed a murder, he would get off, though he helped to kill a country.<sup>275</sup>

Grafton said a commission didn't work at the end of World War I. Why try a commission again when it didn't work the first time? The columnist's proposal was to let the people of each liberated country decide the fate of their fascist citizens. "The moral strength that will free Europe from within will render fascism harmless, and our moral fortitude will not lie in interfering."<sup>276</sup>

Grafton and Steel's columns mark a turning point in the discussion of Darlan. Increasingly, the press became interested in what conditions must be met for Darlan's removal. But the media also began discussing the larger moral issues of how to deal with other Darlans. As the war progressed, there would surely be other fascists willing to switch sides. Even if they didn't switch sides, what did

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<sup>274</sup>Samuel Grafton, "I'd Rather Be Right," *The New York Post*, 21 November 1942, 18.

<sup>275</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>276</sup>*Ibid.*

the Allies propose to do with captured fascists? The Darlan discussion had evolved into the larger moral issue of how to deal with fascists so that the Allies' moral authority would not be compromised, at least in the United States.

#### The Allied Reaction to Roosevelt's Statement

Roosevelt's statement clearly helped calm the American public. Although American papers continued to denigrate Darlan, they now expressed support for the Darlan Deal for purely military reasons. In the United Kingdom, however, strong and vocal criticism continued.

In Parliament, Thomas Horabin attacked the President's statement the very day it was delivered. Horabin claimed that his constituents were bewildered to see the Allies embrace "one of Hitler's most hated satellites."<sup>277</sup> He asked how much more bewildered the people of France must be to see Britain support one of their betrayers. Horabin said Roosevelt's statement did nothing to encourage the captive people of Europe, "because the oppressed peoples no longer trust words."<sup>278</sup> The Allies needed to re-examine their principles. If the Allied nations continue to support

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<sup>277</sup>*Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, col. 446.

<sup>278</sup>*Ibid.*, 447.



fascists instead of men who represent freedom, "I suggest that that way lies disaster for us," he said.<sup>279</sup>

On November 21, the *Manchester Guardian*, in its editorial "A New Phase" discussed the feelings of Members of Parliament on a variety of issues, touched on Roosevelt's statement on the Darlan issue. "On the recognition of Darlan feelings ran deep... The House of Commons, like the rest of the country, dislikes the agreement with Darlan. It is only barely satisfied with President Roosevelt's assurance of its temporary character."<sup>280</sup>

Further evidence of the British public's attitude appeared on November 23 when a letter to the editor appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* responding to the paper's Nov. 18 editorial, "The Darlan Mystery." The letter takes the paper to task for equating Darlan with Laval. Laval had become a fascist long before 1939 and thus could only be regarded as an enemy.<sup>281</sup>

The case of Darlan is very different. He was the commander-in-chief of a Navy which had been fighting as our ally for nine months. In a moment of our gravest danger he gave the order withdrawing the support of the French Fleet. Later, he was solely responsible for withholding from that fleet the knowledge of the very generous

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<sup>279</sup>Ibid.

<sup>280</sup>"A New Phase," *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 November 1942, 6.

<sup>281</sup>H.M. Harwood, "The Darlan Mystery," *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 November 1942, 4.

terms offered by us for its neutralisation, thereby causing those lamentable events which enabled the enemy to drive such a formidable wedge between the French and English nations.<sup>282</sup>

To the writer, Darlan was worse than an enemy, he was a traitor to the Allied cause. In 1940, he sought to accommodate the enemy and dismissed any thought of continuing the war. In war fought for ideological reasons, this meant that Darlan was willing to abandon traditional French and British ideals for those of the enemy. It was too much to expect the admiral to now embrace the beliefs for which the Allies fought.

The *Guardian* again attacked Darlan on November 24 in the editorial "Amnesty." The paper took exception to an amnesty announced by the French North African Commission, the body headed by Darlan, for all persons who had sided with the Allies during the American invasion. To the newspaper, it would have been a greater crime not to support the Allied action in North Africa. The fight against the Axis was to defend a way of life; it was a matter of conscience.

We are apparently to understand that those Frenchmen who supported us committed a crime for which they needed to be pardoned. Perhaps we shall ask Darlan to secure a pardon for General de Gaulle for the crime of coming to Britain to raise

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<sup>282</sup>Ibid.

a French army to support us, a crime for which the Vichy Government sentenced him to death.<sup>283</sup>

On November 26, a motion condemning the Darlan agreement was introduced into the House of Commons.

This House is of the opinion that our relations with Admiral Darlan and his kind are inconsistent with the ideals for which we entered and are fighting this war; furthermore, that these relations, if persisted in, will undermine the faith in us among our friends in the oppressed and invaded nations and impair the military, social and political prospects of the final and complete triumph of the cause of the United Nations.<sup>284</sup>

The threat of this motion proved so real that Prime Minister Churchill read President Roosevelt's statement to the House of Commons. Although the President's statement succeeded in killing the motion, debate and argument concerning the Darlan Deal continued.<sup>285</sup>

The Russian people, too, seemed shocked by the Darlan Deal, except for the most important Russian. Stalin fully understood the advantages of the Darlan Agreement and congratulated the British and Americans for taking advantage of the opportunity the French admiral provided.<sup>286</sup> In his November 28 letter to Churchill, Stalin directly replied to

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<sup>283</sup>"'Amnesty,'" *The Manchester Guardian*, 24 November 1942, 4.

<sup>284</sup>Langer, 372.

<sup>285</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>286</sup>Werth, *Russia at War*, 492.

Churchill's November 24 comments on Darlan, "It seems to me that the Americans used Darlan not badly in order to facilitate the occupation of the Northern and Western Africa. The military diplomacy must be able to use for military purposes not only Darlan but 'Even the Devil himself and his grandma' [Stalin quoted from a Russian proverb]." <sup>287</sup>

Churchill forwarded Stalin's message to Roosevelt, notifying the President of Stalin's acceptance of the deal. <sup>288</sup> Stalin later shared his view of the Darlan Deal with the President personally. In a December 14 letter to Roosevelt, the Soviet leader said he felt Eisenhower's agreement with Darlan was sound military policy. "I consider it an important achievement that you have succeeded in winning Darlan and others to the Allied side against Hitler," Stalin wrote. <sup>289</sup>

But one other party also had problems with the President's statement: Darlan. In a letter to General

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<sup>287</sup>Warren F. Kimball, ed. *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 51.

<sup>288</sup>*Ibid.*, 49-52.

<sup>289</sup>Mario Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French* (Wesport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 97.

Clark, Darlan complained that "Information from various sources tends to substantiate the view that I am 'only a lemon which the Americans will drop after they have squeezed it dry.' " <sup>290</sup>

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<sup>290</sup>Langer, 373.

CHAPTER VI  
DARLAN'S FINAL DAYS

Darlan was not quite ready to be "squeezed dry." Throughout late November and early December, Darlan acted increasingly like a head of state. In fact, General Eisenhower learned on December 3 that Darlan was prepared to declare himself head of state (since Pétain had become a prisoner of the Germans) and form an Imperial Council, composed of his top officials, to administer French North Africa.<sup>291</sup> This announcement proved potentially embarrassing since it directly violated Roosevelt's policy of non-recognition of a French Government until after the war. Eisenhower ordered a stop to the announcement.<sup>292</sup>

Eisenhower explained to Darlan that the U.S. could not be seen recognizing any provisional French government. The U.S. only regarded Darlan as the head of a local administration and not as the French head of state.<sup>293</sup> Darlan got permission to create and head his Imperial Council, but he had to publish the statement as a "joint announcement" and to omit "French Imperial Federation" in an

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<sup>291</sup>Ibid., 376.

<sup>292</sup>Ambrose, 143-144.

<sup>293</sup>Langer, 377-378.

attempt to derive the announcement of any official character.<sup>294</sup> Darlan's final statement read:

An event of far-reaching importance has taken place: French Africa has been given the official structure which will enable it, pending the liberation of Metropolitan France, to defend the general interests of the Empire, to resume in an effective way the fight on the side of her allies, and to represent France in the world....

The High Commissioner, representing French sovereignty, and assisted by the services of the High Commissariat, will henceforth assume the rights and responsibilities of a government in every country concerned.... At the side of the High Commissioner, who represents the French State, the Imperial Council will, from now on, represent the various territories of the Empire...<sup>295</sup>

Despite Eisenhower's attempts to water down Darlan's statement, the public immediately reacted to the admiral's broadcast. In Great Britain, the public outcry caused Members of Parliament to give voice to their constituents' feelings. Many questions were raised against in Parliament about the Allies' policy toward Darlan. The Government's statement did its best to distance itself from the French admiral's announcement:

Lieut-Col. Elliot asked for an assurance that his Majesty's Government were in no way committed by the proclamation made by Admiral Darlan that he

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<sup>294</sup>Ibid., 376.

<sup>295</sup>"Darlan's New Claims," *The Times* (London), 3 December 1942, 4.

was assuming responsibility as head of the Government of Northern Africa.

Mr. Eden—Yes, Sir. His Majesty's Government were in no way consulted about that statement, and do not consider themselves in any way bound by it. (Cheers.)....

Mr. Shinwell— The right hon. gentleman has said that His Majesty's Government were not committed to Admiral Darlan's proclamation. Who is committed to it? Is it some other Government? Are we to understand that Admiral Darlan is himself responsible and no other Government associated with the United Nations?

Mr. Eden—So far as I know it was a unilateral inspiration of Admiral Darlan himself. (Laughter.)<sup>296</sup>

The *London Times* reassured the public that Darlan's claims to political leadership in North Africa were the admiral's own invention in its December 7 editorial, "Admiral Darlan's Status." In it, the *Times* told readers that General Eisenhower "did not do, did not seek to do, and was not entitled to do" confer a permanent political status on Darlan. The only way that political power can be re-established in any French territory is through free elections as stated in the Atlantic Charter.<sup>297</sup>

The issue here is of far reaching importance. The eventual re-establishment of regular organs of government in the countries liberated from the Nazi terror will obviously raise problems of the

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<sup>296</sup>"Britain and Admiral Darlan," *The Times* (London), 4 December 1942, 8.

<sup>297</sup>"Admiral Darlan's Status," *The Times* (London), 7 December 1942, 5.



utmost delicacy and complexity. But it is clear that the decisive voice must come from the peoples of the countries concerned.<sup>298</sup>

A poll conducted by the British Institute of Public Opinion provided further evidence of the British public's disapproval of the Darlan Deal. The survey indicated that 51 percent of those polled disapproved of Darlan becoming head of the French North African government. Only 18 percent on the British public expressed approval.<sup>299</sup>

Across the Atlantic, the *Christian Science Monitor*, in its December 8 editorial "America in Africa" asked whether Darlan was using the United States to achieve his own ends. The paper argued that Darlan had only limited use to the Allies, despite what generals in North Africa might claim. America should use all its power to remove or discredit Darlan before he gathered too much power. Not to do so threatened to break faith with the Allied public, as well as the citizens of Europe.

Aside from the practical aspects of the problem and danger of destroying the hopes and enthusiasm of the French who are disturbed by the apparent rewarding of a man who helped Hitler, there is the

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<sup>298</sup>Ibid.

<sup>299</sup>Hadley Cantril, ed., *Public Opinion: 1935-1946* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951), 241.

necessity for the Allies to keep faith with their own ideals and principles.<sup>300</sup>

The *Monitor* even suggested that the U.S. administer food distribution in North Africa. Removing that responsibility from Darlan would weaken his authority significantly. "But certainly there should be a limit to the 'temporary expedient' and the firmest resistance to Darlan's apparent effort to cement his position by use of American power."<sup>301</sup> In other words, remove Darlan before he caused any more ethical problems for the Allies.

On December 16, another letter to the editor that condemned Darlan appeared in the *New York Post*. The writer, Lynn Forest, argued that it was well past time for Darlan to be removed from power in North Africa. Retaining him not only hurt relations with Allies, but also went against the very principles for which the United States had been founded.

Dear Editor: Our military gains in North Africa may be obliterated by the grave harm being done to the cause of human freedom by our continued acceptance of Darlan.

Darlan Pro-fascist, Vichy mock ruler, collaborator with the Nazi hordes that stripped and tortured France! While at the time a deal with Darlan saved lives, his usefulness is over, and there is no answer we can make to the

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<sup>300</sup>"America in Africa," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 8 December 1942, 22.

<sup>301</sup>*Ibid.*

sickened, angry people, who, with the Fighting French, have starved, suffered and died to wipe out the shame of a defeat that was not theirs, but the defeat of men like Darlan.... Americans tired of tyrants almost two centuries ago. Have we forgotten?<sup>302</sup>

A letter in the December 19 issue of the *New York Post* claimed the Darlan Deal had eliminated any moral reason for the war. The author, Joshua Right, argued that Allied war leaders should not be trusted; the slogans they used to justify the war had been proved false by the Darlan Deal. Instead of placing fascists on trial, we "give them the opportunity to proclaim themselves 'Chief of State,' 'Chief of the Empire' and other titles of Fascistic coinage."<sup>303</sup>

No, we don't believe in these slogans, as long as our commanding officers will deal with traitors, a la Darlan, who rightly belong on the scaffold. Together with the Fighting French we repeat "What are we fighting for?" Certainly not Darlan and his clique.<sup>304</sup>

As late as December 23, editorials and letters still appeared in newspapers attacking Darlan and his political establishment in North Africa. The *New York Post* warned that until the Americans finally disposed of Darlan, the U.S. would never live up to its stated war aims. It based

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<sup>302</sup>Lynn Forest, "Where is Our Hatred of Tyrants?" *The New York Post*, 16 December 1942, 31.

<sup>303</sup>Joshua Right, "What are We Fighting For?" *The New York Post*, 19 December 1942, 19.

<sup>304</sup>*Ibid.*

its argument on three points: that Darlan had nothing left to offer the Allies, that the Darlan situation had strained relations between the U.S. and its British and Free French allies, and that the Darlan Deal has badly hurt American public moral. <sup>305</sup>

Instead of just dropping Darlan, the paper argued, the U.S. played a "diplomatic Alice in Wonderland game," holding relations with Darlan as if he were a sovereign ruler. The American government tried to obscure the issue by calling Darlan a high commissioner instead of head of state and calling our ambassador to Darlan a "civil affairs officer." <sup>306</sup>

Ever since Hitler rose to power, the way to make sure of having to give fascism a lot has been to try to deal with it cheap. Isn't the Darlan case another incredible example of this truism. <sup>307</sup>

In the same issue of the *Post*, another contributor expressed his opinion that retaining Darlan was morally wrong. In his letter to the editor, Morel J. Fuchs argued that Darlan was a fascist and therefore the enemy. Accepting Darlan for temporary military gain proved to be a

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<sup>305</sup> "We're Still Paying Darlan," *The New York Post*, 23 December 1942, 23.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

lie since he failed to bring the French fleet over to the Allied side.

We are fighting for our way of life and the continuance of our existence as a great nation. Would it therefore not be proper at this time to let our Allies and the enslaved people of the world know that their enemies are our enemies and their friends ours?

It is my opinion that Monsieur Darlan... should be treated like a prisoner of war, no better nor worse.<sup>308</sup>

Darlan's reign as political chief of French North Africa did not last long, however. At 2:30 p.m. on a sunny Christmas Eve in Algiers, a young man in his 20s arrived at the southern gate of the Palais d' Été, the headquarters of the Imperial Council. He walked to the nearby Moorish pavilion, which housed the offices of the High Commissariat and signed the registry. A guard admitted the man into the waiting room where he smoked a cigarette.<sup>309</sup>

Shortly after 3 p.m., a car containing Admiral Darlan drove into the compound. Darlan and his aide, Captain Hourcade, promptly proceeded to the Admiral's office. As Darlan passed the waiting room on the way to his office, the

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<sup>308</sup>Morel J. Fuchs, "Would Make Darlan Prisoner of War," *The New York Post*, 23 December 1942, 23.

<sup>309</sup>Tompkins, 185-186.

young man drew a gun and shot him twice. Darlan collapsed in his office doorway.<sup>310</sup>

Hourcade grabbed the man about the throat and wrist. As the man tried to free himself from Hourcade's grip, the gun went off again, grazing the Captain's cheek. Hourcade released the man and the assassin took aim at Hourcade's stomach and fired. Hourcade tried to jump out of the bullet's path, but the bullet entered his thigh.<sup>311</sup>

By this time several guards had arrived in the waiting room. As the assassin attempted to flee through a window, one guard grabbed the assassin while another guard used a chair to knock the gun out of his hand.<sup>312</sup>

While the guards struggled with the assassin, three of Darlan's administrators emerged from the nearby offices to tend to the Admiral. Darlan lay with his eyes open, bleeding from the mouth.<sup>313</sup> A rear admiral and a sailor carried Darlan to a car and drove him to the hospital which was treating his son, Alain.<sup>314</sup> Darlan was conscious throughout the drive, but unable to speak due to his wounds. Twenty minutes later, at the hospital, a surgeon pronounced

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<sup>310</sup>Ibid., 186.

<sup>311</sup>Ibid.

<sup>312</sup>Ibid.

<sup>313</sup>Ibid., 186-187.

<sup>314</sup>De Montmorency, 177.

him dead. The bullets had punctured his liver and intestines.

When the news of Darlan's assassination reached the United States, the press overwhelmingly condemned the murder. The Allied cause was not about eliminating political opponents but about restoring political pluralism. For all their criticism of the Darlan Deal and abuse of Admiral Darlan himself, most newspapers claimed the assassination solved nothing. Yet they saw in Darlan's death an opportunity to unite the various French factions on the Allied side and any Vichy remnants.

The *Washington Post* expressed this exact sentiment on December 26. In the editorial "Exit Darlan," the *Post* assured readers that despite Darlan's switch to the Allied side, his administration in North Africa continued Vichy policies. For instance, the paper said, Darlan eased censorship rules and restrictions on communication only shortly before his death, and probably at Eisenhower's insistence. However, the *Post* said, the removal of this fascist-leaning Frenchmen provides an opportunity:

The assassination of Darlan removes a man with whom the kind of Frenchmen who never lost their faith in France could not collaborate. But on the council in North Africa, there are many Frenchmen who believe in France, who would die for her, who have given many sacrifices in her behalf. These are the sort of men who might—and could—hoist a French standard which would be worthy in the sight of the free world and of the Free French. There

was no such standard in North Africa when Darlan was high commissioner.<sup>315</sup>

The *Christian Science Monitor* expressed similar beliefs. In the paper's December 26 editorial, "Darlan-Not a Solution," the *Christian Science Monitor* argued that the most pressing problem caused by the Darlan murder was the choice of successor. When Darlan lived, he claimed to derive his authority from Marshall Pétain, which forced many "loyal but legal-minded French officers" from supporting other French leaders. After Darlan's assassination, the paper said, two or three Frenchmen existed who could become his legitimate successor. The choice of successor provides "a new opportunity to work out solutions of internal differences which were bound to exist until the nature of Darlan's role could be ascertained."<sup>316</sup>

The *New York Times* also stressed French unity in its December 26 editorial. In "The End of Darlan," the *Times* provided readers with a brief biography of Darlan's life and the rationales behind the Darlan Deal. Chiefly, that only Darlan had the authority to order an end to French resistance to the Allied landings. Darlan's death raised the problem of who could claim that authority.

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<sup>315</sup>"Exit Darlan," *The Washington Post*, 26 December 1942, 6.

<sup>316</sup>"Darlan-Not a Solution," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26 December 1942, 20.



What is most important is to secure the French leadership most likely to be accepted, most likely to make for unity rather than division in the French North African civil population and armed forces.<sup>317</sup>

On December 27, an editorial cartoon, titled "Smoke from a Little Pistol," (see Figure 1) appeared in the *Baltimore Sun*.<sup>318</sup> Like the editorials from the previous days, it too expressed concern that Darlan's assassination would create a power struggle in North Africa for the leadership of the anti-Axis French movement.

Figure 1: Smoke from a Little Pistol




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<sup>317</sup>"The End of Darlan," *The New York Times*, 26 December 1942, 10.

<sup>318</sup>"Smoke from a Little Pistol," *The Baltimore Sun*, 27 December 1942, 12.

These issues of succession were, in fact, being considered in North Africa. If another Vichyite was selected to lead the Imperial Council, the Americans would again be accused of supporting a pro-fascist government and cutting deals with the enemy. Darlan's Deputy High Commissioner had been General Jean Marie Bergeret. Bergeret produced an ordinance, dated December 2, in which Darlan had named General Noguès his successor should the admiral be temporarily incapacitated. Should Darlan be unable to serve as High Commissioner, the Imperial Council was to meet and elect a successor.<sup>319</sup>

In an effort to determine the mood of the Imperial Council, Murphy visited Bergeret on Christmas Day and discovered that the Deputy High Commissioner favored Noguès. Murphy told Bergeret that the American public would oppose Noguès. "Giraud is very popular in the United States," Murphy said.<sup>320</sup>

At this point, Giraud had no knowledge of the American efforts on his behalf; he had been leading the French forces in Tunisia. When he arrived back in Algiers for the meeting of the Imperial Council, he was immediately summoned to meet with General Clark. At that meeting, Clark informed Giraud that Eisenhower "considered it necessary that he immediately

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<sup>319</sup>Langer, 379-380.

<sup>320</sup>Tompkins, 192.

take over the functions of High Commissioner."<sup>321</sup> Although Giraud at first claimed that he only wanted a military command, he quickly changed his mind. At noon on December 26, the Imperial Council met and unanimously elected Giraud High Commissioner.

As High Commissioner, Giraud inherited the task of investigating Darlan's murder. The assassin, it was soon discovered was a 20-year old French royalist named Bonnier de la Chapelle.<sup>322</sup> De la Chapelle was involved with an anti-Nazi group of five other young Frenchmen that a Free French organizer had helped form in Algiers.<sup>323</sup>

The group originally planned to assassinate Darlan while in his car. A car driven by one of the French conspirators would take out Darlan's motorcycle escort. Another car would drive up beside Darlan's car and spray the car with gunfire. The plan was dropped because it involved too many people, and it was decided to send someone to Darlan's office and assassinate him there. The four Royalists then drew lots to determine which one of them would perform the murder. De la Chapelle won the drawing.<sup>324</sup>

After the assassination, the Count of Paris, the pretender to the French throne, arrived to speak with

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<sup>321</sup>Ibid., 193.

<sup>322</sup>Crawford, 80.

<sup>323</sup>Ambrose, 147.

<sup>324</sup>MacVane, 144.

General Giraud. The Count proposed his own nomination as head of the Imperial Council on the grounds that he might bring French unity. Giraud refused to forward the Count's nomination. Soon afterwards, the Count returned to his home in Spanish Morocco. The Royalist plot had failed.<sup>325</sup>

This placed de la Chapelle in a dangerous position. Although he expected to become a national hero, Giraud had him executed by a firing squad two days after the assassination.<sup>326</sup> Clearly, de la Chapelle expected to be saved as he talked to the police about his plans to pursue a diplomatic career. De la Chapelle had told police that he had acted alone in the assassination plot. When the plot to bring about a de facto restoration of the French monarchy had failed, de la Chapelle had become a liability. No sympathetic Frenchmen or fellow royalist conspirator dared step forward to save the man's life.<sup>327</sup>

Even so, the police arrested 14 men in connection with the assassination plot. Many of those arrested had been among the pro-Allied sympathizers who helped the U.S.

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<sup>325</sup>Ibid., 144-145.

<sup>326</sup>Ambrose, 147.

<sup>327</sup>MacVane, 145.

landing forces come ashore on November 8.<sup>328</sup> Four of the men arrested were high North African officials appointed by Darlan. Their charges included neglect and plotting to establish a new French government. These arrests proved to be an attempt by pro-Vichy authorities to round up the major Allied sympathizers in Algiers. Eventually all were cleared.

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<sup>328</sup>Ibid., 147-149.

## CHAPTER VII

## CONCLUSION

On the evening of January 14, 1943, a C-54 transport plane carrying President Roosevelt landed at the Casablanca airfield. Casablanca had been chosen as the scene for the next meeting of the leaders of the Allied movement. Roosevelt had come there ostensibly to meet with Churchill (who had arrived on January 12) in order to plan the next stages of the war.<sup>329</sup> (Stalin did not travel to the conference, arguing that he could not leave his headquarters for even a few days.)<sup>330</sup> In reality, Roosevelt planned to use the conference to deal with another issue. Although Darlan had died in December, the issues which he had come to symbolize persisted.

If the Americans might make a deal with Darlan, who had served as prime minister in the fascist Vichy government, might the Americans also try to deal with the King of Italy, who had sanctioned Benito Mussolini's fascist government for twenty years? Would the Allies be open to receiving more turncoat fascists? Could these men survive to play a role in post-war European governments? Where better to deal with

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<sup>329</sup>Kimball, 117.

<sup>330</sup>Weinberg, *A World At Arms*, 437.

these issues than in North Africa, where the entire Darlan controversy first arose.

The Casablanca Conference also seemed an ideal opportunity to end the feuding between the various French factions which had formed after the Darlan Deal. This would help quiet those critics who claimed that the deal essentially provided recognition of a fascist group at the expense of friendly and anti-fascist Free French movement. Darlan's assassination and Giraud's ascension as his successor now made a solution to this criticism look possible.

As previously noted, Giraud was well liked in the United States. He had a long record of fighting the Germans; he had refused any position in the Vichy government; and he had assisted the United States action in North Africa. Although he had cooperated in Darlan's North Africa government and succeeded Darlan as its head, Giraud's previous record allowed him to escape any fascist taint. Roosevelt could use Giraud's ascension as High Commissioner in North Africa, as opposed to an overt Vichy figure, as evidence of the United States' commitment to defeating fascism. A reconciliation between General de Gaulle's Free French movement and Giraud's North African administration could provide further evidence of that commitment.

However, Giraud and de Gaulle's meeting at Casablanca proved a spectacular failure. Nobody came away from the

Casablanca Conference believing that a unified French resistance was about to be formed. Giraud had come to Casablanca expecting that he would leave as the leader of the Free French. De Gaulle had come to Casablanca only after Churchill had threatened to withdraw British funding for the Free French.<sup>331</sup> Once at Casablanca, de Gaulle insisted that the Free French represented all of France while Giraud only represented the brand of fascism embraced by Darlan.<sup>332</sup> Although Roosevelt and Churchill attempted to get the two to form a unified command structure, neither French general was willing to grant anything to the other.<sup>333</sup> The animosity between the two men was obvious at a joint British-American press conference on January 24. The two French generals agreed to shake hands, but neither man appeared happy.<sup>334</sup>

The discord between the various French camps failed to reassure the American public that the Darlan Deal had not been made at the sacrifice of our allies. If Roosevelt and Churchill intended to bury Darlan once and for all, that also meant that they had to state that no more deals with former enemy agents would be made. Roosevelt made this

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<sup>331</sup>Kimball, 121.

<sup>332</sup>Crawford, 89.

<sup>333</sup>Kimball, 121.

<sup>334</sup>MacVane, 183.



statement soon after the two bickering French generals had left the press conference.

Peace can come to the world only by the total elimination of German and Japanese war power... The elimination of German, Japanese, and Italian war power means the unconditional surrender by Germany, Italy, and Japan. That means a reasonable assurance of future world peace. It does not mean the destruction of the population of Germany, Italy, and Japan, but it does mean the destruction of the philosophies in those countries which are based on conquest and the subjugation of other people.<sup>335</sup>

The unconditional surrender doctrine had a history independent of the Darlan affair. In fact, discussions on unconditional surrender had begun after the Americans entered the war. The U.S. State Department's Subcommittee on Security Problems considered unconditional surrender as early as April, 1942. The subcommittee—composed of members of the State, Army, and Navy—claimed that the U.S. was only at war because Germans believed their armed forces had been betrayed by the German political leaders at the end of World War I. The subcommittee recommended "On the assumption that the victory of the United Nations will be conclusive, unconditional surrender rather than an armistice should be sought from the principal enemy states except perhaps Italy."<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>335</sup>Feis, 109.

<sup>336</sup>Ibid., 108.

The subcommittee's chair, Norman Davis, who had previously served as an ambassador-at-large and was good friends with Secretary of State Hull, brought the subcommittee's findings to the President.<sup>337</sup> Churchill, in turn, was told of Roosevelt's support of the policy by August 1942, months before the North African landings.<sup>338</sup> The President clearly committed himself to the unconditional surrender policy. On December 2, 1942, Roosevelt told General Wladislaw Sikorski, head of the Polish government-in-exile, that "We have no intention of concluding this war with any kind of armistice or treaty. Germany must surrender unconditionally."<sup>339</sup>

Yet despite the long-term consideration of the unconditional surrender policy, Churchill claimed he was surprised by Roosevelt's statement. Clearly the Prime Minister's surprise could not have been over the announcement of such a policy because the two men had discussed the issue during the conference.<sup>340</sup> Roosevelt had told Churchill that he favored such policy and was thinking of making a public statement. Churchill, for his part, sent a message to his War Cabinet:

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<sup>337</sup>Ibid., 108-109.

<sup>338</sup>Kimball, 119.

<sup>339</sup>Weinberg, *A World At Arms*, 439.

<sup>340</sup>Kimball, 119.

We propose to draw up a statement of the work of the conference for communication to the press at the proper time. I should be glad to know what the War Cabinet would think of our including in this statement a declaration of the firm intention of the United States and the British Empire to continue the war relentlessly until we have brought about the "unconditional surrender" of Germany and Japan. The omission of Italy would be to encourage a break-up there.<sup>341</sup>

The War Cabinet responded favorably to the policy, but asked that Italy be included under the policy. However, Churchill and Roosevelt did not return to the topic after their initial discussion. Neither man brought up the issue when reviewing the contents of the joint statement intended for release at the end of the conference.<sup>342</sup>

So why was Churchill surprised by Roosevelt's announcement of the unconditional surrender pledge? The Prime Minister had known of the American's preference for the policy for months. Only a short time before, the President had told Churchill that he was thinking of publicly discussing the policy. But the details of the unconditional surrender policy had yet to be formalized. Churchill had yet to inform Roosevelt of the British Government's opinion nor had the President sought out the British response. Churchill must have thought the matter would be taken up at some latter date.

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<sup>341</sup>Feis, 110-111.

<sup>342</sup>Ibid.

So the real question becomes not why the unconditional surrender policy was formed, but why did Roosevelt choose to make a public statement at the time he did. Clearly, Roosevelt wished to reassure Stalin and the Soviet Union that the United States and the United Kingdom intended to remain in the war until its end, especially since it was now clear that the Western Allies would not attempt to open a second front in Europe in 1943.<sup>343</sup> Earlier in the conference, Marshall had argued against a major operation in Europe, preferring to put off any full-scale invasion until 1944, but he supported Eisenhower's proposal to invade Sicily or Sardinia once the Germans and Italians in Tunisia had been defeated. Churchill also advocated an invasion of Italy, feeling that only a move into Europe could pacify the Soviets.<sup>344</sup>

Immediately after the Casablanca Conference, Roosevelt sent Marshall to Moscow in order to discuss the delay in opening a second front with Stalin. Roosevelt wanted to reassure Stalin that the Western Allies had no intention of reaching a type of "Darlan Agreement" with pro-fascist, German elements that would allow the Germans to continue to wage war against the Russians.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>343</sup>Weinberg, *A World At Arms*, 439.

<sup>344</sup>Kimball, 118.

<sup>345</sup>*Ibid.*, 119.

Bearing these factors in mind, Roosevelt may have made the unconditional surrender pledge as a way to reassure the Soviets that the United States and the United Kingdom were committed to the war. But as already noted, Stalin recognized the strategic advantage of using Darlan and didn't see Eisenhower's agreement with the French Admiral as hurting the Soviet position. Moreover, Stalin had stated this exact position to both Roosevelt and Churchill. The President had little reason to think that Stalin had misinterpreted the reasons for the Darlan Agreement. Roosevelt no doubt understood the foreign policy advantages of the unconditional surrender policy, but the statement had stronger domestic advantages.

The public commentary on the Darlan Deal had continued for over three months in both the United States and the United Kingdom. While the American public may have eventually accepted the Darlan Deal for its strategic reasons of saving lives and saving time, it was clear that many felt it violated the spirit of the Four Freedoms speech and the Atlantic Charter. By demanding unconditional surrender, Roosevelt was able to reclaim the moral high ground.

It may have been the President's desire to restore the moral justification for the war that led him to leave Secretary of State Cordell Hull in Washington. When Churchill suggested bringing Anthony Eden, the British

Foreign Secretary, with him to Casablanca, Roosevelt objected because he didn't want to bring Hull. The Secretary of State had rigid ideas and would be a nuisance Roosevelt said. Specifically, Hull opposed unconditional surrender and was closely identified with the Darlan Deal. Hull's presence at Casablanca would have made Darlan transparent.<sup>346</sup>

In fact, Roosevelt linked his decision to announce the unconditional surrender pledge with Darlan and the North African political situation on several occasions, albeit indirectly. Once, when recalling the announcement, the President said:

We had so much trouble getting those two French generals together [de Gaulle and Giraud] that I thought to myself that this was as difficult as arranging the meeting of Grant and Lee—and then suddenly the press conference was on, and Winston and I had no time to prepare for it, and the thought popped into my mind that they had called Grant 'Old Unconditional Surrender' and the next thing I knew, I had said it.<sup>347</sup>

The meeting between de Gaulle and Giraud represented the first meeting of the Free French and Darlanist French elements. The unconditional surrender doctrine helped prevent future agreements like the one which created competing French organizations in the Allied camp. It did

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<sup>346</sup>Dallek, 374.

<sup>347</sup>Feis, 110.

this by establishing three main points. These points included developing "confidence and a sense of solidarity among the United Nations," making it clear that no compromise peace with the Nazis would take place, and refusing to accept any post-war fascist regime.<sup>348</sup>

These points, as embodied in the unconditional surrender policy, directly dealt with the major public concerns that came out of the Darlan Deal. By encouraging a sense of solidarity among the Allies, Roosevelt dealt with the criticism that the United States had abandoned the Fighting French by entering into the Darlan Deal. The announcement of unconditional surrender reiterated the Allies' commitment to defeating fascism.

The President discussed this point and linked it to the Darlan Deal in his February 12, 1943 radio address about the Casablanca Conference. Roosevelt cautioned that Axis propaganda sought to divide the United Nations by claiming that the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, and China would all go to war against one another after Germany was defeated.

This is their [the Axis nations] final effort to turn one nation against another, in the vain hope that they may settle with one or two at a time—that any of us may be so gullible and so

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<sup>348</sup>Clayton D. Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors: America's Crusade Against Nazi Germany* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 160.

forgetful as to be duped into making "deals" at the expense of our Allies.<sup>349</sup>

Besides reassuring the public that there would be no more Darlan Deals, Roosevelt also strengthened the position of his British ally. Darlan's position in North Africa had created an even greater uproar in Great Britain than in the United States. Not only was the deal criticized in the British press, but also in Parliament. Churchill was forced to give several statements in the House of Commons in secret session. It was clear from these sessions that sentiment in the Commons opposed the Darlan Deal. If Churchill came under severe criticism for one Darlan Deal another might threaten his position as prime minister. Churchill's predecessor had been forced from office shortly before the fall of France. By making the unconditional surrender pledge, Roosevelt established policy that prevented any future deals with men of Darlan's ilk.

By rejecting any compromise peace, the President dealt with the fear that the United States might be willing to deal with Hitler and Mussolini as it had dealt with Darlan. This fear had its roots in the Americans' World War I experiences. At the end of World War I certain segments of the American public argued that Germany should be forced to

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<sup>349</sup>Franklin Roosevelt, "Radio Address,"  
<<http://msstate.edu/Archives/History/USA/WWII/casablan.txt>>,  
12 February 1943.



surrender. The adherents of this position included General George Pershing, head of the World War I American forces in Europe, and Congressional Republicans. Despite this sentiment, President Wilson's administration, which included Roosevelt, joined an armistice with Germany.<sup>350</sup>

The lack of a German surrender helped create the belief that the German army had never been defeated. Instead, the German army had been stabbed in the back by the new democratic German government that had come into being after the war. Hitler and Nazis had used this belief to discredit democratic institutions, argue that the post-war settlement had unfairly singled out Germany, and rebuild the German military.<sup>351</sup>

To the American public, the Darlan Deal raised the shadow of the World War I Armistice. Instead of forcing the enemy to acknowledge its defeat and discredit its institutions, the Allies seemed to be creating a formula for the fascism to survive the war and pose a future threat. Roosevelt wanted to avoid this at all costs.

Roosevelt's third objective was the total elimination of Nazism. Since fascism was presented as the moral opposite of democracy, some sort of reckoning had to take place. A complete battlefield defeat would help discredit

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<sup>350</sup>Weinberg, *A World At Arms*, 438-439.

<sup>351</sup>*Ibid.*, 439.

Nazi and fascism philosophies but, as Roosevelt stated in his February 12 radio address, he wanted to ensure that the fascist humiliation ran so deep that democratic governments replaced fascist regimes:

In our uncompromising policy we mean no harm to the common people of the Axis nations. But we do mean to impose punishment and retribution in full upon their guilty, barbaric leaders...

In the years of the American and French revolutions the fundamental principle guiding our democracies was established. The cornerstone of our whole democratic edifice was the principle that from the people and the people alone flows the authority of government.

It is one of our war aims, as expressed in the Atlantic Charter, that the conquered populations of today be again the masters of their destiny. There must be no doubt anywhere that it is the unalterable purpose of the United Nations to restore to conquered peoples their sacred rights.<sup>352</sup>

With the announcement of the unconditional surrender pledge, the Western Allies were able to put the Darlan Deal behind them. Although Roosevelt did not expect the public outcry which resulted from Eisenhower's agreement with Darlan, it was a predictable consequence of the President's statements depicting World War II as a moral struggle. To gain public support for his pro-Allied policies, Roosevelt had expressed American foreign policy in terms of the Four Freedoms speech and the Atlantic Charter. These documents

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<sup>352</sup>Roosevelt, "Radio Address."

claimed that the fascist philosophy constituted a direct threat to the American lifestyle and committed the United States to restoring democratic governments and human rights to nations ruled by fascist governments.

When General Eisenhower agreed to recognize Admiral Darlan's authority in French North Africa, it seemed that the United States' previous statements of policy and the moral imperative of the war had been abandoned. Instead of fighting to eliminate fascism, the United States was allowing the Vichy fascist government to retain its power in American occupied territory with a fascist cabinet member (Darlan) at its head.

The public's outrage over this situation expressed itself in newspaper editorials, letters to the editor, and statements of opposition in national legislatures. Several times the President attempted to quiet the national outrage. However, only the unconditional surrender pledge directly addressed the issues raised by the Darlan Deal and restored the moral principles for which the war was fought.

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